

“Home is where one starts from:”  
Space in Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot

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of spaces. Hallgren's "The Waste Land" is ultimately successful because it captures just how spatialized Eliot's poetry truly is.

Indeed, the spatial nature of Eliot's poetry is not just important in the context of his own work, but in the context of the Modern period as a whole. Changes in the Modernist era, largely technological innovations, radically altered the way modern people viewed space and time. The new experiencing of space and time became a universal phenomenon. In some ways, the world contracted: someone could pick up a phone and talk to someone else hundreds of miles away. In other ways, space expanded: with the advent of airplanes, people could cross oceans and continents quickly. Stephen Kern writes in his book *The Culture of Time and Space* that

From around 1880 to the outbreak of World War I a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space. Technological innovations including the telephone, wireless telegraph, x-ray, cinema, bicycle, automobile, and airplane established the material foundation for this reorientation; the independent cultural developments such as the stream-of consciousness novel, psychoanalysis, Cubism and the theory of relativity shaped consciousness directly. The result was a transformation of the dimensions of life and thought (1-2).

Kern goes on to give a variety of examples of how this change in spatial perspective manifested itself in cultural forms, among them art and literature. For example, the Impressionists broke the traditional rules of point of view and framing. Later, Cezanne broke further with conventional art when he rejected traditional perspective and attempted to merge foreground and background in his paintings. Later still the Cubists "abandoned the homogeneous space of linear perspective and painted objects in a multiplicity of spaces from multiple perspectives" (Kern 143). Indeed, it was in the Modern period where the characteristic 'positive space' and 'negative space' of painting merged to create a space with both background

and foreground combined: "positive negative space" (Kern 153). Clearly, in the art world, space had contracted to one singular plane.

A change in the view of time and space happened in literature as well, as "painters and novelists faced contrasting challenges in reproducing the dimensions of experience" (Kern 148). For example, James Joyce narrated events "from a number of points of view in order to give a fuller sense of them," famously manifested in the "Wandering Rocks" episode of *Ulysses* (Kern 149). Not only novelists were affected by this change, but poets as well. Kern writes that, "While empty space and silence were used as subjects of novels and short stories, in poetry there was a formal shift in the conception of the poem from an arrangement of words to a composition of words and the blank spaces between them" (172). Eliot certainly plays with these 'blank spaces' in his poetry. Often his poems move abruptly from one setting to another, forcing the reader to mentally transport himself or herself to a new space to keep pace with the narrator of the poem.

In fact, Eliot's use of space is interesting because he is a lyrical, not spatial poet. Eliot's poems contain a strong lyrical component, and while narrative poems tend to have a strong spatial component, lyric poems typically do not induce the reader to imagine space. In lyric poetry, we hear the lyric speaker's voice, but do not necessarily receive a clear picture of where that voice is coming from. Despite the tendency toward lyric in Eliot's poetry, his work appeals more to our imagination of space than other lyric poems, which makes him in a particularly interesting case to study.

The reorientation of space in the modern era lead me look at how space appears in Eliot's poetry. Not only does space appear, but it is also clear that Eliot put much time and effort into including descriptive, meaningful settings in his poetry. As I concentrated on a few specific

poems: *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1917), *Portrait of a Lady* (1917), *Preludes* (1917), *Gerontion* (1920), *The Waste Land* (1922), *Landscapes* (minor poems), and *The Four Quartets* (1930's), I began to notice the frequency with which Eliot refers to and describes the various settings in his poetry. Different categories of space began occurring over and over again: the various rooms Eliot writes of comprise an arena of interior space; the many streets scenes that appear in his poetry comprise exterior space and the thresholds between the interior and exterior spaces became a category in themselves- the liminal spaces. Furthermore, Eliot's poetry, especially his early work, is particularly interested in the city or the urban environment. This category of space is multi-layered; it includes the generic cityscape, references to specific cities like London or Boston and then mentions of exoticized cities, or cities presented in opposition to what Eliot assumes his reader is familiar with. In Eliot's later work, he explores the geographical setting of the landscape, but as I read more of these landscapes, there seemed to be different types that didn't necessarily fall into the same category. Thus, I chose to divide Eliot's landscapes, or any setting with a large natural component, into two categories: places where humans could feel at home termed 'human' or 'habitable' landscapes and places devoid of any domesticity, termed 'inhuman' or 'hostile' landscapes. Finally, Eliot's early work betrays an interest of his in the tension between foreign and domestic spaces, or more literally, the tension between 'home' and 'abroad,' but this idea appears to have been dropped the further Eliot moved into his poetic career. It is important to note, however, that the American Eliot lived much of his life in England, so the 'home and abroad' issue certainly is relevant to his own life.

I had found, in these types of spaces, categories to make the issue of space and geography manageable: interior and exterior space and the thresholds in between; the city or urban landscape; the issue between home and abroad; human landscapes and inhuman

landscapes. My next step in this project was to try to figure out why Eliot had made the effort to include, and included repeatedly, these specific landscapes. Surely there was a meaning attached to them. If so, what was it? And each time the spatial instance was encountered, did it mean the same thing? And what, after creating a type of codification of space in Eliot's work and achieving a greater understanding of how Eliot uses space and geography in a select group of his poems, could that tell us about the rest of his work? These were the questions that I set about answering as I began conducting my research and study on the choice Eliot poems that seemed to especially deal with space and geography.

In addition to studying the poems themselves, I consulted the work by other Eliot scholars, infinitely more knowledgeable than myself. For example, for information on Primitivism, Modernism and the city in general, I consulted Robert Crawford. For insightful and detailed analysis of the presence of landscapes in Eliot's poetry, I looked to Nancy Duvall Hargrove; for information about *The Four Quartets* specifically, I read the work of Steve Ellis. Additionally, I utilized theoretical reading from Gabriel Zoran about space in narrative, Marie-Laure Ryan's work on cognitive mapping in narrative and Mikhail Bakhtin for information about the chronotope (specifically the chronotope of the threshold). With a pile of theoretical readings, a bookshelf full of volumes on Eliot and a list of categories to study, I began my work to uncover how space and geography function in the poetry of T. S. Eliot.



**"Oh, do not ask 'What is it?'  
Let us go and make our visit."  
—T.S. Eliot™**

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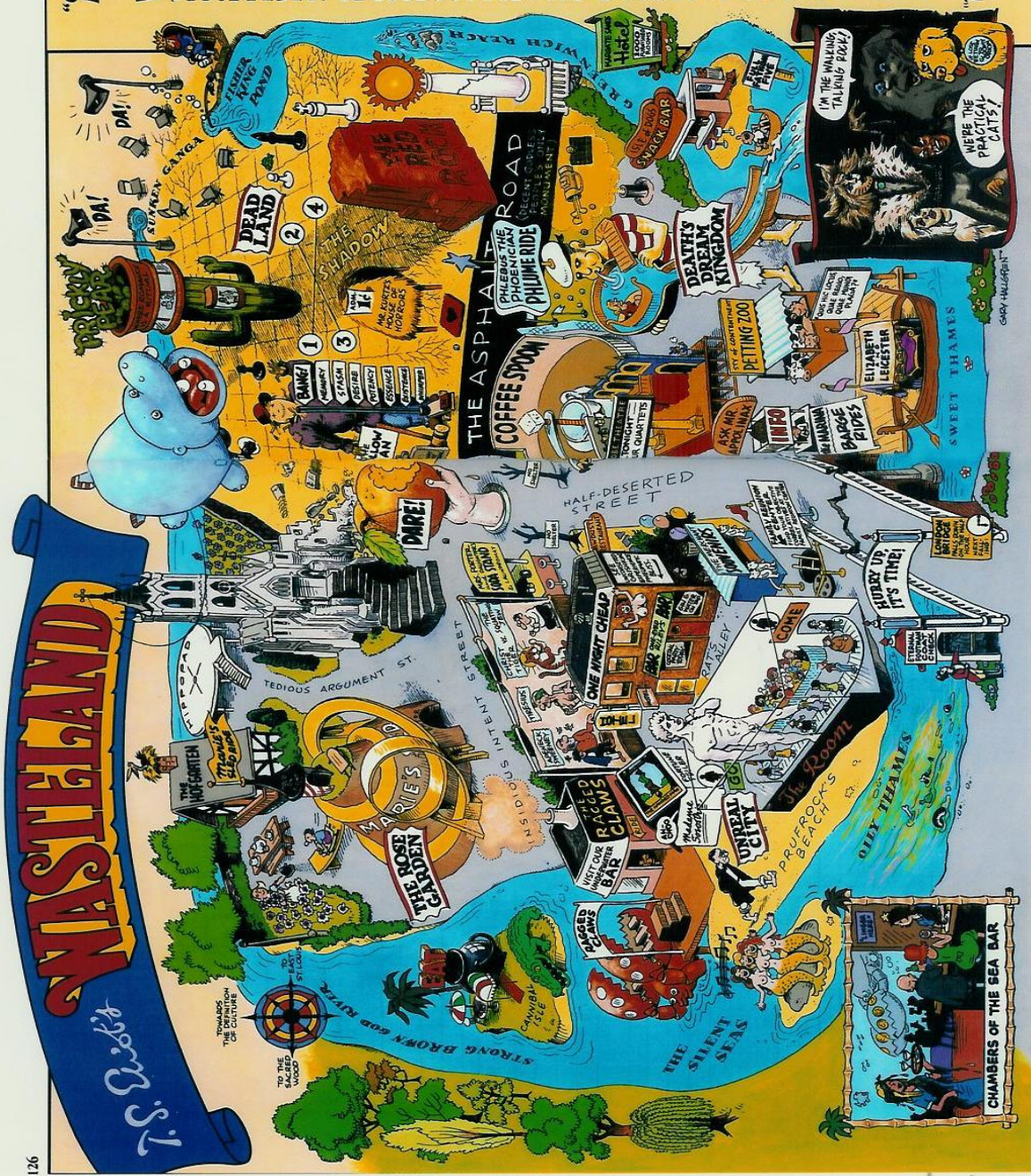
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## Chapter One: Interior Space, Exterior Space and the Thresholds in Between

In the poetry of T.S. Eliot, distinctions between interior space and exterior space carry significant meaning, as do the thresholds that exist between them. Eliot parallels the physical space occupied by his characters with the actions they take and the thoughts they have- and ultimately connects them to a level of humanity or meaning present in their lives. In instances of private interior space, Eliot finds the most meaning and the most room for humanity because people can escape some of the conventions and conformity present in society. However, Eliot sees the interiority of a private interior space, as a rarity in modern, and especially urban, life. Second to that, shared interior rooms allow a degree of interiority because of the fact that they are still interior spaces and somewhat removed from society as a whole. Yet the presence of others in the shared interior rooms causes the characters to sometimes act or think according to social convention. This is the phase of space that holds the second largest level of positive meaning for Eliot, since the private world of his characters is still, to some extent, present. As the characters move from interior space to an exterior space, they encounter a liminal space: the threshold. Just as a physical threshold is the area between one distinct space and another, the emotional and mental threshold the characters occupy is the grey area between their thoughts and motivations and the brave face, the conventional persona, they will present to a conforming society: “a face to meet the faces that you meet,” as Eliot himself writes in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (*Prufrock* 1.27). They have enough internal condition to wonder about their actions and which they should take, but not enough to actually decide what to do or how they feel. Thus, the liminal spaces of the thresholds contain a negative meaning for Eliot. All they contain is characters locked into a state of indecision. Finally, the occupation of exterior space, and the social and mental conformity to daily routine that Eliot attaches to existence in exterior

space, is what he finds most prevalent in the world, especially city life, and yet it possesses a negative sense of meaning. Furthermore, the instances of interior and exterior space in Eliot's poetry are all emotionally charged. Eliot does not include an insignificant instance of space in his poetry. Private rooms are where characters confront their disillusionment or a bleak reality, or, every so often, dare to hope. This contrasts with social rooms where characters find themselves trapped by the empty confines of human and societal relationships, and know their interior condition well enough to know they want more. In both private and public rooms, Eliot's poetry evidences a strong sense of longing: longing to be elsewhere, longing for human connection, longing to be something else, longing for a world or reality that cannot or does not exist. The sense of dissatisfaction with present reality or situation can be found in the many instances Eliot includes in his poetry of liminal spaces, thresholds in between the interior and exterior spaces or the transitional areas that occur between rooms, public or private, and street or city scenes. And yet these thresholds and these emotions are trapped in a state of indecision and the need for movement, but not the capability to do so. Exterior spaces filled by mechanical, routine-following characters are cold and incredibly sad.

### **Private Rooms**

Eliot's private rooms allow a secluded space for characters' introspections and their private actions. These rooms are associated with a positive meaning for Eliot because these rooms allow the characters to retain their humanity through the experience of pure emotion. Though sometimes gloomy, Eliot's detailing of how people think and behave in a private sphere evokes a sense of their inner world and the way which they honestly react to the world. Their reactions seem to hinge on a deep-seated sense of despair or hope that emerges after being buried

under their everyday motions as they weave through life. Indeed, Gabriel Zoran points out that space is an integral influence on character as he writes that, “Every element in space... has to be regarded...as a *juncture*, in which patterns from all the textual planes may intersect: patterns of space together with patterns of characterization, ideas, mythology, and so forth” (333). Thus, in this light, Eliot is equating private rooms with the character’s private world. When Eliot writes in the second section of *The Preludes* that in a city’s early morning, “One thinks of all the hands/That are raising dingy shades/ In a thousand furnished rooms,” he gives the simple action as evidence that these characters are adhering to yet another set of daily and routine actions (l. 21-23).

In much the same vein, Eliot details a scene in another private room, a bedroom, in the third section of *The Preludes*. Casting the reader as his character by the use of the second person, Eliot writes that “You tossed a blanket from the bed,/You lay upon your back, and waited;/You dozed, and watched the night revealing/The thousand sordid images/Of which your soul was constituted” (*Preludes* l.24-28). The private sphere of the bedroom allows the ‘you’ character to revert back to a dream-like stage that unearths subconscious thoughts. What is revealed are low and dirty images created from what appears to be a sense of disillusionment or despair the ‘you’ character undergoes. This instance of interiority present in private interior space is cemented on the ‘you’ character’s experience of very real human emotions that resulted from introspection. Although not a happy instance, it is what Eliot considers to be a meaningful instance, indeed.

In Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, he deals with interior private rooms in relation to a very specific character, the female typist. As readers find with this character, not all glimpse of interiority are pleasant or edifying. While our ability to understand the private world of the typist

is meaningful- both for our sake and hers, her world is revealed to be incredibly empty. The typist is captured first in menial, everyday tasks: clearing breakfast, lighting the stove, attending to laundry. She then expects a guest, a man who turns out to be a lover: “the young man carbuncular” (*Waste Land* l. 231). But the lover is not enthusiastically received, nor does he awaken any positive emotions in her, instead the man and his advances are met with “indifference” (*Waste Land* l.242). The emphasis on the routine and indifference that characterizes the typist’s actions in her private sphere suggest that internally, she feels very little. She is not passionate about anything in particular or anyone in particular and her life is ruled by a numb monotony. She echoes this by her thoughts after sex: “‘Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.’” (*Waste Land* l.252). Her complete lack of emotion suggests that her internal world is a waste land as well. Eliot explicitly critiques and mourns this barrenness of her life (and no doubt, the lives of many others like her) by the use of the character Tiresias.

### **Shared Interior Spaces**

Eliot’s further utilization of interior space extends to his creation of scenes occurring in interior, but shared, rooms. While Eliot paralleled interior space with his characters’ interiority, Eliot uses the shared aspect of domestic interior rooms to illustrate his characters’ exteriority: the way they appear, how they behave and their attempts and failures to connect. And yet the connection of the interior space and characters’ interiority is still present; they continue to have thoughts, but don’t always let themselves acknowledge them or express them. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot explores interior social spaces in “A Game of Chess.” The first image we have is of a magnificent woman in an opulent surrounding: sitting in a chair like a “burnished throne” under a candelabrum, covered in jewels and satin and smelling of fragrant perfumes (*Waste Land*

l. 77-87). She is a modern day princess in full splendor, described in language that evokes Shakespeare's Cleopatra. On the surface, she looks regal and powerful. Yet Eliot includes a reference to the Athenian princess Philomela, raped by Tereus, who had her tongue cut out and then was later turned into a nightingale who sang her sad song "'Jug Jug' to dirty ears" (*Waste Land* l.103). These mythological examples evoke a sense of deep and rich tragedy that our princess cannot have; instead she dwells in an empty and vacant world. She addresses our narrator, challenging him to speak: "My nerves are bad to-night... Stay with me. Speak to me" (*Waste Land* 111-112). And yet he remains silent. Despite her splendor and wealth, the woman desires human connection, forming a contrast between her private neediness and public splendor. And yet, perhaps she only allows herself to have these thoughts because of her location in an interior room. Exterior space is clearly seen as a threat, suggested by the unwanted wind at the door (*Waste Land* l.118). The appearance of music, "that Shakespearian Rag" offers a brief sense of hope, but it does not last long (*Waste Land* l.126). She soon pleads with her companion, "What shall I do now?... What shall we do tomorrow? What shall we ever do?" (*Waste Land* l.129-132). Marianne Thormahlen expands on this, stating in her essay "The City in *The Waste Land*" that Eliot's poetry is soaked in "urban imagery, [and] a small number of fixed topographical features keep cropping up... the most frequent one is the street motif...[which] looms as the only alternative to the closed room- 'I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street/ With my hair down, so' - and yet it constitutes no escape from private agony" (235).

Her question is answered. It will be the normal everyday routine of life: "the hot water at ten... a closed car at four... a game of chess" (*Waste Land* l.132-134). Thus, her interiority and private emotions are subjugated to the routine of the exterior realm of society. She will quell her sadness by a daily routine.



## Public Interior Spaces

If the first half of “A Game of Chess” takes place in an upper middle class domestic space, the second half of “Game” takes place in a working class public house, or pub. The scene is different, but the characters share parallels with the modern princess. The narrator or ‘I’ character talks to the reader and relates a story about Lil and her husband Albert trapped in a marriage where their emotional and sexual relationship have become mechanical and stale. The interiority of the room allows for the discussion of this personal conversation, but the reader is continually reminded that this bar or restaurant is a public space. “Hurry Up Please It’s Time” says a barman trying to close the pub who consistently interrupts the conversation (*Waste Land* l. 138). And while the narrator attempts to continue the retelling of the story the narrative voice ultimately conforms to the bartender’s wishes and concludes with goodbyes. The last words of “Game” are the words Ophelia speaks as she goes mad after her desire and love for Hamlet have been thwarted. This can be read as a warning of what could happen if one conforms too much to the conventions of the public sphere of life. Interior public spaces allow enough interiority to raise personal issues, but not enough freedom to really delve in and solve them.

## Thresholds

Eliot deals with both interior and exterior spaces, and both can suggest things about his characters and their psyches. However, he also pays special attention to the thresholds in between the interior and exterior scenes. Transitional spaces like doorways, windows and stair cases are important aspects of the spatial relations of Eliot’s poetry. Indeed, as Gabriel Zoran notes, “one should also take note of the different effects of the spatial image if the text chooses to move from the internal to the external or vice versa” (321). Apart from Zoran, many others have

dealt with the issue of liminal spaces and liminality. Eluned Summers-Bremner writes in “Unreal City and Dream Deferred” that “*The Waste Land* is fascinated by liminal states of all kinds, including seasonal ones conveyed by rain, frost, and lack of water. But just as significantly, it is compelled by what these liminal stakes, taken more broadly as cultural markers or movements of unbelonging, make possible or what exceeds them, as though in an attempt to cover over a wound within language, and history, that is still burning” (266).

Additionally, anthropologist Victor Turner deals specifically with the liminality associated with different stages of life and theorist Mikhail Bakhtin writes on the space- time configuration in literature in *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin states that “The word ‘threshold’ itself already acts a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage... and is connected with the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold)” (248). Thresholds, for Eliot, contain less positive meaning than the interior spaces because they include little instances of the characters’ interiority, but the fact that the character still retain enough thought and desire to cause them to debate what they should or should not do is evidence of a small amount of humanity remaining. Therefore, the meaning Eliot attaches to thresholds is different from that which he attaches to the completely barren exterior space.

## **Windows**

One way liminality manifests itself in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is by the emphasis in the poem on windows. The transitional physical spaces are linked to a sense of uncertainty and indeterminacy that is voiced by the character of Prufrock. Eliot writes of a “yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes” (*Prufrock* l.15). A fog that, like a dog,

“rubs its muzzle on the window-panes” before curling around the house and falling asleep (*Prufrock* l.22). The window pane is the barrier between interior and exterior space; the fact that the fog does not penetrate the window but that it envelops the house suggests that not only the characters of the poem but the natural elements of the world of *Prufrock* are bound by an entrapping indecision. Another instance of windows in *Prufrock* is when Eliot writes of “lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows,” unsure of whether they wish to remain in their interior space or move into the exterior world (*Prufrock* l.72).

### **Staircases**

Additionally, Prufrock wonders in *Prufrock* whether to take an intended action or not, thinking ““Do I dare?”” (*Prufrock* l.38). He also considers exiting the building (‘her’ salon?) he intended to enter, thinking that there will be “time to turn back and descend the stair” and re-inhabit the exterior space of the street (*Prufrock* l.39). Prufrock’s position on the staircase is one of being in-between, of not being able to fully occupy an interior space or an exterior space. Likewise, the character of Prufrock is able to acknowledge his internal fear and hesitation about life, but cannot take any definitive external actions to resolve them. Thus, spatially and emotionally, Prufrock’s indecision binds him to a liminal space and an indeterminate state.

### **Doorways**

Doorways, much like other liminal spaces, function as indeterminate areas of space in which characters debate which actions to take and which spatial arena to inhabit. When the modern princess in *The Waste Land* asks “What is that noise?” and as the narrator answers her in thought only, “The wind under the door,” we as readers perceive the threat of the wind as being

the same as the threat of the exterior space lurking outside the room (*Waste Land* l.117-118). Despite the threat of exterior space, the princess considers running out into the street as she is now, “with [her] hair down so” because her internal despair seems to motivate her to do something drastic and dramatic (*Waste Land* l.131). If she cannot answer the questions of “What shall I do now? ... What shall we ever do?” then she may decide to change spatial arenas in an attempt to answer it (*Waste Land* l.129-132). However, she takes no decisive action. Indeed, in spite of her thoughts of movement, she stays where she is and surrenders to her prescribed daily routine.

### **Passageways**

Passageways are also places where shadows of interior space and exterior space fall, but neither space is fully present. In the first section of the *Preludes*, the narrator writes that “The winter evening settles down/ With smells of steaks in passageways” suggesting that while passageways are exterior spaces, near the street and outside of the house, they still are infiltrated with evidence of internal space, for instance, the smell of a dinner cooking inside (*Preludes* l.1-2). There is an implied sense of longing to be indoors, with the family eating dinner, but the narrator makes no marked attempt to either go home or join and instead only continues describing what he sees. In *Burnt Norton*, Eliot also mentions passageways. “Footfalls,” says the narrator, “echo in the memory/ Down the passage which we did not take/ Towards the door we never opened/ Into the rose-garden” (*Burnt Norton* l.11-14). Here too, passageways are associated with a lack of action (not choosing the passage, not opening the door) but also with being an area that ties the internal space of the house (passages, doors) to the external garden. Emotionally, being in passageways also presents a conflict between interiority and exterior actions as the

character is not in a completely private area to reflect, but neither is he or she in a public area where he or she needs to put on a mask and pretend. Eliot captures this vacillation of emotions in *Burnt Norton*: “The inner freedom from the practical desire/The release from action and suffering, release from the inner/And the outer compulsion” (l.73-75). Another famous passageway found in Eliot’s poetry occurs in *Gerontion*, as he writes of the many metaphorical passageways of history: “Think now/ History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors” (l.35).

### **Street Scenes**

If, in the snapshot image Eliot creates of interior and exterior space, the interior spaces are the images, then external space becomes the images’ negative. Exterior space counters interior space in every way. Because of this, because of the inherent lack of humanity in the exterior scenes, Eliot attaches to it a negative meaning. These instances of exterior space typically occur in the form of street scenes in which any chance of introspection is lost completely and what we see are characters roaming through the streets, only conforming to the motions and routines of society. Thus, we find very empty and hollow characters inhabiting deserted street- scenes.

### **Half- Deserted Streets**

In *The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock*, the narrator tells the reader “Let us go, through certain half- deserted streets,” and describes them as “streets that follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent” (l.4, 8-9). The desertion of the streets mirrors the lack of true human connection present in the poem, echoed by the reference to a tedious argument, a way of



communicating without relating to someone. The narrator acknowledges that this barren situation is an insidious trap to fall into. While feeling nothing and emotionally freezing over is attractive at first because it includes no sense of sadness or grief, even Prufrock's narrator acknowledges that this mode of living may be enticing but is ultimately harmful.

Later on, the first section of the *Preludes* includes further instances of empty and isolated street scenes. The narrator tells us that "at the corner of the street/ a lonely cab-horse steams and stamps/And then the lighting of the lamps" (*Preludes* l.11-13). The exterior space is full of people moving to get home, walking or via cab, before darkness settles in. No one stops to talk to their neighbor, no one stays out in the street. Instead, the only occupant mentioned is not even a human, but rather a lonely cab-horse. Furthermore, the lighting of the lamps is not only an act to ward off the darkness of night, but it also serves as a somewhat isolating event. If one walks in a dark street at night, the only thing he or she can see is what is directly illuminated by the orb of light the street lamp puts out. Anything outside the sphere of light is lost, and his or her reality shrinks immensely.

Eliot offers the foil of the deserted night street scene in the second section of the *Preludes*. In a morning moment, the narrator describes a deserted street scene as the city wakes. As "the morning comes to consciousness," so do the "sawdust-trampled street/ with all its muddy feet that press/To early coffee-stands" (*Preludes* l.14,16-18). People who did not linger in the streets the night before still do not linger to talk or interact in the street now. Instead, they rise and pass through city streets, alone, tired, needing a cup of coffee from a kiosk to wake them from their stupor before heading to work again and letting the same day as yesterday play out. This functions as a prime example of people in an exterior space eradicating all thoughts, emotions or longing and instead just going through the motions to begin another day: the walk to

work with muddy feet, a crappy cup of coffee. Eliot echoes this with his sentiments that the journey to the coffee stand is not the only way people just move through the motions of daily living. He writes that in addition to the coffee-stands, there are “other masquerades/That time resumes,” meaning that with morning, other instances of routine and a sense of mechanical living restart (*Preludes* 1.19-20).

In addition to scenes of half-deserted streets, Eliot includes other instances of exterior street scenes. There are the vacant lots of the *Preludes*, as Eliot first describes “newspapers from vacant lots” and then mentions again metaphorically in the lines “The worlds revolve like ancient women/Gathering fuel in vacant lots” (1.8,53-4). Additionally, instances of crowded city streets occur throughout Eliot’s poetry, specifically in *The Waste Land* as the narrator depicts the image of “A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many” (1.62).

Eliot seems to suggest that people’s actions and instances of thought are directly tied to their spatial surroundings. Interior instances of space in private rooms in Eliot’s poetry typically give insight into a character’s private thoughts and emotions. A shared interior space shows how people interact while still thinking their own thoughts. The thresholds that exist between interior and exterior space speak to characters who don’t know what to do or what to think. And finally, in exterior space, Eliot describes characters who simply conform to societal routines and norms. In this constructed hierarchy of space that Eliot has created, the instances of human thought and emotion present in interior spaces is given the most value because it is the most meaningful. Yet these precious moments happen rarely. Much more common are the instances of masses of people mechanically existing in their daily routine. The lack of their introspection or their emotional response to life gives this mode of living in Eliot’s eyes a negative meaning.

## Chapter Two: Cities and Urban Settings

### Cities in Eliot

Czech Architect Dalibor Vesely writes in his essay “Modernity and the question of Representation,” that

An overwhelming number of people in modern society think of architecture and the city as ‘a given to be endured, an art to be designed, a madness separate from reality or as a fragment that cannot endure’. They occasionally respect or admire it, but more often they tend to ‘flee it, condemn it, ignore it, try to live in it, or just use it to create their own fragments. Everyone emotionally or intellectually, politically or economically grabs his fragment, which is partially real and creates a total reality with it. The splintered identities, the competing ideologies, the fractured parties and the glaring, cluttered advertising of competing businesses assault the person and the society from a thousand different sides (81).

The phenomenon of the estranging effect of the modern city has been grasped by architects, artists, scholars and authors alike. Indeed, the city features prominently in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. Urban waste lands abound, either in the form of specific and detailed cities like London, in generic descriptions of city blocks, masses of people, or blackened streets. Cities even exist in a fantastical or exoticized contexts, like those mentioned at the end of *The Waste Land*: Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria and Vienna. Nearly all of the instances of urban environments in Eliot’s poetry are attached to a feeling of alienation. Indeed, as Eliot describes in the fourth section of the *Preludes*, a “city block,” a “blackened street,” and other common urban features like evening newspapers, he is also quick to attach “the notion of some infinitely gentle/ Infinitely suffering thing” that is found existing “around these images, and [that] clings” to them (l.40-51). Thus, the vacancy of city scenes and urban environments is connected, in Eliot’s poetry, to a sense of emotional and social loss; the buildings and streets may be cold and artificial, but so are the people that inhabit them. Vesely, like Eliot, points to something other than steel and concrete for

the creation of a feeling of disconnect in the urban environment: “the danger of emptiness haunted modern architecture from its very beginning. However, it is important to realize that the emptiness was caused not only by the buildings, but also by the absence of articulated public culture” (90). Cities, in Eliot’s poetry, encompass both a structural and emotional emptiness.

### **Specific Cities**

Eliot does not limit himself to the generic city scene. Specific references to actual cities abound in his poetry, and none is so featured as Eliot’s beloved and detested London herself. Eliot was, however, careful to only portray London in a piecemeal fashion, echoing Vesely’s sentiments of the fragmentary, fractured and splintered nature of modern urban environments. Indeed, many portions of the manuscript of *The Waste Land* were pared down, through Pound’s advice, to eliminate direct addresses to the city herself. Thus, when we examine *The Waste Land* for instances of London, we must search carefully for the direct references to a place or landmark in London. The result is a puzzle-like image of London: enough to know the outline of the city, but with enough pieces missing to create an incomplete picture of her.

Additionally, although Eliot includes many accurate and specific details of London, he also works to create a somewhat skewed view of the city. As Eluned Summers-Bremner writes in “Unreal City and Dream Deferred,” *The Waste Land*’s “cast of theatrical international characters, and its theme of urban hallucination and decontextualized linguistic play produce a London far stranger than the historical London of the century’s early years” (264). Eliot almost seems to be projecting a London in ruins that will be created if the emptiness of modern society continues. Summers-Bremner also notes that

Cities are zones within nations where questions of home and belonging become particularly charged, as the languages and customs of different races and cultures are brought into dynamic

proximity with each other... The London of *The Waste Land*... while recognizable as London by its reference to certain landmarks and kinds of speech (London Bridge and St. Mary Woolnoth; the cockney slang of Lil and friends), contains a relative lack of London voices, as well as of social and historical detail related to the city. Instead, we find a montage of references to other cities, cultures, and languages: Russian, German, French, Spanish, Indian and Greek. The combined effect is to displace and perplex the reader (268-9).

*The Waste Land* itself is full of specific references to London, the main setting of the poem. In the last stanza of the first section, "The Burial of the Dead," the narrative voice delves into a great description of London, a place that he calls an "Unreal City" (l.60). The narrator describes London Bridge and the "crowd [that] flowed over" it, the same crowd that "flowed up the hill and down King William Street,/ To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours" ( *Waste Land* l.62-67). The familiar setting of London, however, becomes unfamiliar due to the strange, robotic people who make up the crowd that moves through the city. "I had not thought death had undone so many," says *The Waste Land's* narrator (l. 63). He goes on to describe the people that make up the crowd and that seem profoundly affected by the death and loss prevalent in their post-war society: "sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, and each man fixed his eyes before his feet" (*Waste Land* l. 64-65). Here, Eliot alludes to Dante's *Inferno* and the image of the souls in Hell, invoking a sense of deep hopelessness and despair. These London inhabitants rendered emotionless and mechanical by the war are what make the realistic and specific locations in London described by the narrator (London Bridge, King William Street, Saint Mary Woolnoth) unnerving to the reader; these strange people make the city unreal.

Robert Crawford comments on the contrast between the specificity of London and the unreal quality Eliot gives to the city. Crawford writes "that 'Unreal City' is so striking partly because it conforms to our normal notions of reality. We can find London Bridge and King William Street on the map" (52). Crawford ties the contrast in the poem to the contrast in Eliot's



life while writing *The Waste Land*: despite Eliot's ordinary existence as a banker living in a London flat dealing with a failing marriage, he was writing a poem full of images of a bizarre, barren version of London inhabited by ghost-like people. Indeed, the city herself may have acted as inspiration for this 'Unreal City': "London itself... may have furnished encouragement for the line Eliot's thought was taking... Haunted by the voices of the past, Eliot had come to inhabit the landscape of his earlier reading. From that landscape, masking the real London around him, grew *The Waste Land*" (Crawford 131). This combination of concrete details interwoven with a sense of emotional, societal and religious emptiness contributes to what Crawford calls a "surreal context" in the poem (132). While Eliot was not a Surrealist himself, he experienced the same phenomenon as his contemporaries, the French surrealists, who viewed the city as an unconscious body. While the Surrealists found this view exhilarating, Eliot found the experience painful.

In another section of *The Waste Land*, "The Fire Sermon," the narrative voice takes up the idea of the Unreal City again. After alluding to the tragedy of Tereus's rape of Philomela, the narrator then turns to modern activity. He is accosted by the Greek merchant Mr. Eugenides, who is shipping currants to London and who asks the narrator "to luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel/ Followed by a weekend at the Metropole" (*Waste Land* l. 209- 214). This instance of the everyday business meeting at the Cannon Street Hotel can have no deep sense of meaning or tragedy like Greek mythology. Furthermore, Eugenides's offer of a weekend at the Metropole is an attempt to seduce the narrator. The suggested homoerotic encounter is yet another example of how the urban environment can pervert human interactions. When *The Waste Land* was written in the 1920's, homosexuality was viewed as a degenerate form of sexuality. When another Greek mythological hero, the gender- transcending Tiresias, compares this to the great Greek

heterosexual love affairs, it would have paled in contrast, indeed. Thus, the juxtaposition between a rich tragic myth and the superficial business interactions and homoerotic encounters that take place in modern London create an uncomfortable contrast that makes the setting of London seem inconsequential compared to the rich mythological history of the Greeks. Eliot was not the only Modernists to work in this vein of comparison. His contemporary James Joyce wrote his masterwork *Ulysses* based on the same idea. In comparing the mundane daily actions of Leopold Bloom to the epic of the *Odyssey*, Joyce points out just how far modern life has fallen from the time of antiquity.

Further on in the poem Tiresias encounters the typist's lackluster love affair, the narrator again acknowledges the discrepancy between the rich history of the ancient Greek world and the sterile routine of modern London. "O city city," cries the narrator, "I can sometimes hear/Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street/ The pleasant whining of a mandolin" in the church of St. Magnus the Martyr, a church that holds "Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold" (*Waste Land* l.259-265). Thus, the vibrant world of the ancient Greeks only survives as a relic in a London church. And then the narrator lists seven specific places in London: Greenwich, the Isle of Dogs, Highbury, Richmond, Kew, Moorgate and Margate Sands. He is clearly alluding to the seven hills that legendary Rome was built on and contrasting them with seven rather ordinary locales around the city. Here again, the glory of the ancient world is reduced only to shadows in modern English society. The stark difference between the two casts London and her inhabitants as mere ghosts of what civilization and society was in the past.

In *Burnt Norton*, Eliot, very similarly to *The Waste Land*, alludes to seven specific areas around London, as he states that "Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,/"

Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,/ Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here/  
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world” (l. 113-116). Once again, what the poet calls the  
‘gloomy hills of London’ are contrasted with the seven hills of Rome. What served as the  
foundation of one of civilization’s greatest empires is now translated, in modern society, into  
gloomy hills in a ‘twittering world’.

The city of London is also featured in other poems in the *Four Quartets*. In *The Dry Salvages*, for instance, a specific London Street is compared to a continent. “When there is  
distress of nations and perplexity/Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware  
Road./Men’s curiosity searches past and future/And clings to that dimension,” writes Eliot (*Dry Salvages* l.201-204). Thus, these instances of the ‘distress of nations’ and ‘perplexity’ affect  
everyone, not only huge expanses of land and people like Asia, but also people living right in  
London, on the major street of Edgware Road. Here again, Eliot mixes universal emotions like  
perplexity with specific spatial references.

In *Little Gidding*, Eliot imagines a London at war, terrifyingly close to what the city  
resembled in the Blitz of World War II. “After the dark dove with the flickering tongue/Had  
passed below the horizon of his homing/While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin/Over the  
asphalt where no other sound was/Between three districts whence the smoke arose/I met one  
walking” (*Little Gidding* l.83-88). Universal and overarching topics like war and death are, in  
this instance, tied to a very specific city, Eliot’s London.

Marianne Thormahlen expands on Eliot’s use of London in *The Waste Land*, arguing that  
Eliot took pains to make sure the specific places he mentioned had a particular connotation:  
“Lower Thames Street means wharves, warehouses... menial labour; and by staging the Stetson

encounter among white-collar workers surging into the City Eliot suggests an aspect of timelessness in the movements of the masses...Under the spell of the city which claimed him as a young man and retained him until his death, he made poetry out of London's streets, squares, buildings and districts" (236). Eliot's use of specific sites in London was purposeful. His acknowledgement of certain working class areas echoes his acknowledgement of the working class, an unprecedented role for them in the poetry of the time. Marjorie Perloff explains this as "Eliot's particular brand of urbanism, an awareness of proletarian life,[that is] derived, no doubt, at least in part from Baudelaire, but [is] quite new on the Anglo-American scene" (26). She also cites the words of George Oppen, as he comments that "'the first shock of Eliot's 'damp souls of housemaids' [a line from "Morning at the Window"] and similar lines was not the rather perfunctory dismissal of housemaids as people, *but the fact that he saw them at all* (Oppen 1992:58)" (Perloff 26). The very mention of housemaids and other aspects of working-class urban life is unprecedented in poetry until Eliot's work.

London also appears in Eliot's manuscript version of *The Waste Land*. He addresses the city twice in apostrophe in the first drafts of "The Fire Sermon". "London," Eliot writes, "the swarming life you kill and breed,/ Huddled between the concrete and the sky" (*Facsimile and Transcript* l.107-108). In the next stanza, Eliot addresses London again in an abstract image of her population suffering: "London, your people is bound upon the wheel!" (*Facsimile and Transcript* l. 116). Pound advised Eliot to eliminate the explicit addresses to London, which now causes the reader of the published poem to have to mentally connect the narrative content to its address of London from other clues found in spatial allusions.

Additionally, *The Waste Land* manuscript contains several stanzas that make up sea scenes occurring around Boston in “Death by Water” that Pound advised Eliot to cut out entirely. Eliot hints that he is writing about the sea near Boston in lines like “We beat around the cape and laid our course/ From the Dry Salvages to the eastern banks” (*Facsimile and Transcript* 1.15-16). The cape alludes to Cape Cod and the Dry Salvages are rocks off of Massachusetts. The city of Boston itself is invoked in the draft of “The Burial of the Dead” that begins with a scene of characters named Tom, Jane, Harry and Joe celebrating their “Irish Blood” and referencing the “Buckingham Club,” a series of historic apartments and a “German Club” that could well be associated with Boston University (*Facsimile and Transcript* 1.8,24,44). Pound advises Eliot to cut out all Bostonian references, as well as many of the sea scenes. The result is that *The Waste Land* acquired a much more city- oriented and English feel.

### **Generic Cities**

Eliot also includes many spatial allusions to the generic and typical urban environment. However, these instances of generic cities tend to be harsher than those of a specific city like London. For example, in the fourth section of the *Preludes*, the narrator mentions several prototypes for generic city description. First, he mentions the image of a city block in the lines “His soul stretched tight across the skies/That fade behind a city block” (*Preludes* l. 39-40). This description parallels the way that Eliot opens *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* with the lines “Let us go then, you and I/ When the evening is spread out against the sky/ Like a patient etherized upon a table/ Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets” (*Prufrock* 1.1-3). In both poems, the sky is portrayed as something that stretches to fit, that must accommodate the city. The image in the *Preludes* is especially charged, as this city block is one that blocks the sky and

that stretches the male character's soul. Clearly, this city block is meant to represent the soullessness of an urban environment and the effect it has on its inhabitants. The city, then becomes an all-encompassing environment that will eventually swallow up the city-dwellers. The narrator acknowledges this by commenting on "The conscience of a blackened street/ Impatient to assume the world" (*Preludes* l. 46-47). The "blackened" description of the street implies both the color of artificial materials like tar and an underlying sinister nature of the city and the phrase "impatient to assume the world" suggests that the effect of the city, turning its inhabitants to mechanical beings, is spreading globally as urban metropolises expand.

The narrator has painted a picture of an almost monster-like force of the city, a dark and engulfing force that spreads across the world. And yet, in a switch of perspective, the narrator then acknowledges whom the urban environment affects, but is vague about who exactly it is. "I am moved," says the narrative voice, "by fancies that are curled/ Around these images, and cling:/ The notion of some infinitely gentle/ Infinitely suffering thing" (*Preludes* l.48-51). The monstrosity of the urban effect could not wholly kill the sympathy the narrator feels for the singular object who suffers at the expense of urban modernity. And yet the word 'thing' is ambiguous; it could mean city-dweller, it could mean a scrappy street dog. Thus, in the *Preludes*, Eliot sets the modern city not against the ancient city as he did with his poetry dealing specifically with London, but rather sets the modern city against the vague notion of what suffers inside it.

In *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, the narrator leads us through a path full of typical city landmarks. "Let us go," he says, "through certain half-deserted streets,/ The muttering retreats/ Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels/ And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells"

(*Prufrock* l. 4-7). Yet each instance of a landmark is portrayed negatively: the streets are half-deserted, the hotels cheap and the restaurant floors covered in sawdust. The sawdust covered floors are an explicit reference to the working class nature of the restaurant. Only in working class establishments would the floor be made from wood shavings that could be swept up and replaced the next day after patrons had spilled their food and booze off the table. The narrator does not describe an environment that is conducive to society or a high quality of living, rather he sets the stage for the type of life *Prufrock* discusses: one of anxiety, alienation, and a failure to connect.

In *East Coker*, Eliot sites a number of generic items in a city, but also attaches those images to a sense of impermanence. He describes the scene of modern construction and reconstruction: “Houses , rise and fall, crumble, are extended,/ Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place/ Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass/Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,/Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth” (*East Coker* l.2-6). Modern society is characterized by a highly ephemeral quality, suggesting even if the city exists now, it won’t in years to come. This is yet another way in which the modern city becomes unreal.

Furthermore, Eliot extends his critique of urbanity to city-dwellers in *The Dry Salvages*. He introduces his idea that “the river is a strong brown god” (*Dry Salvages* l.1-2). The river delivers water, a life-giving source, to the city, but the modern city inhabitants don’t pay any attention to it, other than realizing that a bridge is necessary to cross it. Eliot writes that although “the brown god is almost forgotten/By the dwellers in cities- ever, however, implacable,/ Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder/Of what men choose to forget” (*Dry Salvages* l.6-9). In this instance, the city and the people who live in it are portrayed as being



estranged from nature and being so caught up in modern life to realize the importance of water as a life-source. In this way, cities are directly opposed to nature and are portrayed as being cold and sterile.

In *Little Gidding*, the city image makes its appearance as well. Much as in the *Preludes*, Eliot speaks of a sense of disillusionment in tandem with the image of a city street, using charged phrases like ‘exasperated spirit,’ ‘refining fire,’ and ‘disfigured street.’ “From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit/Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire/Where you must move in measure, like a dancer’/The day was breaking. In the disfigured street/He left me” (*Little Gidding* l.146-150). Eliot additionally implies that the street is grungy, littered and barren: a scene that is illuminated to unpleasant effect in the early morning light. The ‘disfigured street’ is also tied to a sense of emotional loss, as the companion of the narrator departs at that moment.

Finally, the instances of generic cities also manifest themselves in Eliot’s mentioning of public transportation. With the advent of new, modern cities, new ways of transporting huge masses of people from one area to another- quickly and efficiently- became necessary. Thus, inventions like the railway system and the underground subway are synonymous with modern urban development. Modern public transportation creates the interesting phenomena of bringing massive amounts of people together only to have everyone vacantly lose themselves in their own thoughts. In *East Coker*, Eliot illustrates the behavior of people on the Tube: “Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long between stations/And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence. And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen/ Leaving only the growing terror or nothing to think about” (*East Coker* l.120-124). Eliot ties the alienating effect of modern cities to a technology they necessitated the invention of, underscoring

that although modern cities may possess innovative technology, the effect of disconnect among urban dwellers is still very much present in modern city life.

In *The Dry Salvages*, Eliot explores another type of modern transportation, the train, and how the ability to move quickly from the country to the city allows people to think that by escaping one place for another, they can somehow escape themselves. The idea of continual transport and infinite mobility may challenge some people's notion of self. Eliot writes, "When the train starts, and the passengers are settled... Fare forward, travelers! not escaping from the past/ Into different lives, or into any future; You are not the same people who left that station/ Or who will arrive at any terminus" (*Dry Salvages* l.134-142). Perhaps the continual motion and the speed at which urban life progresses allows people to become so detached from fellow city-dwellers, themselves and nature; they are simply moving too fast to realize how they are living.

### **Exoticized Cities**

In his poetry, Eliot alludes to both foreign and non-Western cities, but does so in a way that makes them seem to lie outside the realm of the real. Indeed, even Eliot's descriptions of specific places around London only serve to move the city from something readers may recognize to something the narrator labels as 'unreal'. As Eluned Summers-Bremner writes in "Unreal City and Dream Deferred," "In *The Waste Land* we find this same careful cultivation applied to the representation of the city, as a superficial Englishness- a city originally recognizable as London, if only dimly, by the poem's end becomes any city, every city ("Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/Vienna London/ Unreal)" (269-70).

By labeling the cities as unreal, Eliot grants them a transcendental quality, almost as if by making these physical places unreal, he can imbue them with a spiritual or eternal significance. As Eliot moves his city-spaces to the universal and timeless realm, he is engaging in a transition of what Dalibor Vesely calls “the space of real possibilities to the space of possible realities” (88). In one sense, Eliot portrays his cities as his own commentary and critique of modern life. In another sense, Eliot is inviting the reader to consider spatial instances for themselves by portraying how intimately a person is connected to his or her physical surroundings. Eliot acts to alert the reader, in a poetic sense, of what Vesely comments on from an architectural perspective: “because our existence is always spatial, the nature of lived phenomenal space determines the topography, orientation, meaning and sanity of our existence” (99).

In the final section of *The Waste Land*, “What the Thunder Said,” the narrator mentions several cities specifically: “Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/Vienna London” and calls them all “unreal” (*Waste Land* l.374-376). Although the narrator has referred to London in previous sections as an ‘Unreal City,’ this is the first time he has done so to other cities. The effect is a sort of leveling of geographical and topographical boundaries. To call all of them unreal is to make each city equally remote to the reader, whether it is a place readers may be more familiar with, such as London, or less familiar with, such as Alexandria. In short, what the narrator does here is universalize the poem. Eluned Summers-Bremner echoes this by tying it to Ezra Pound’s influence: “Eliot’s debt to Pound for the final, pared-down version of *The Waste Land* is well known. Pound internationalized and Europeanized the poem by de-emphasizing its American references and, through compression, highlighting the textual echoes of its time and places” (264). An effort to universalize the poem works to both alienate readers by giving them little spatial precision, but also to expand the relevance of his poetry to a wider set of people,

conveying the message that modern life, not just modern English life, is both alienating and susceptible to the same ‘fall’ that ancient civilizations encountered.

Delmore Schwartz highlights in his essay “T.S. Eliot as the International Hero” that, “Eliot’s work is important [to modern society] in relationship to the fact that [modern] experience has become international” (213). The many instances of international cities Eliot includes, along with the characters who span national borders, like the Greek mythological heroes or the German Marie, all contribute to this theme of internationality. Schwartz defines that further: “To be international is to be a citizen of the world and thus a citizen of no particular city... it is the turning world in which the human being, surrounded by the consequences of all times and all places, must live his life as a human being and not as the citizen of any nation” (215). *The Waste Land* is composed in multiple languages, from English to French to Sanskrit. And while Eliot’s Christian themes in the poem are well-known, he also nods to many other religions of the world. Schwartz explains this by stating, “the international hero finds that all beliefs affect the holding of any belief...he finds that many languages affect each use of speech” mentioning directly the ending of *The Waste Land* that is written in four different languages (215).

## **Munich**

Indeed, the first instance of place we encounter in *The Waste Land* is not England, but the German city of Munich, as the character Marie recounts her time in Germany: “Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee... And we went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten” (l.8-10). And yet the narrator makes sure to remind us that these instances of place in Munich are mere memories because Marie soon relapses into other memories of childhood sledding with her

cousin the archduke. These instances of Germany are no more real than allusions to ancient Greece or Rome that appear elsewhere in the text.

### **Jerusalem**

In the final section of *The Waste Land*, “What the Thunder Said,” the narrator opens the section with scenes of Christ’s Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane: “After the torchlight red on sweaty faces/ After the frosty silence in the gardens/ And the agony in stony places” (l.322-324). The Garden of Gethsemane is a place deeply imbued with religious significance. The spiritual weight added to the real physical location only serves to alienate the reader from the concrete image of the garden and makes Gethsemane seem fantastical, unreal.

### **The Other ‘Unreal Cities’**

In addition to London and Jerusalem, Eliot writes in *The Waste Land* that Athens, Alexandria and Vienna are all unreal cities. What is particularly interesting about Athens, Alexandria and Vienna is that they all were, at one point, the capitals of empires that have now fallen: Athens was at the heart of the classical Athenian Empire, Alexandria was a jewel city in the crown of the Ptolemaic Empire, and Vienna the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These three cities share a rich and powerful past that has somehow been lost to Modern society. Robert Crawford comments further as he writes that “Whether Carthage or London, the poem’s cities are seen as horrible, life-denying” specifically the ones Eliot mentions as unreal: Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna and London (144). This is because in cities, “the seasons’ impact is dulled, the rituals of fertility seem to lose their meaning, but they continue, processing

scenes in a play before Tiresias” which makes the cities seem devoid of all possibility of regeneration, of life” (Crawford 144).

### **Athens**

Athens is a city continually alluded to in *The Waste Land* by the many instances of Greek mythological figures and singular references like the one Tiresias makes to “Ionian white and gold” in “The Fire Sermon” (*Waste Land* 1.265). Athens is commonly referred to as the birthplace of Western Civilization and the civilization that created democracy. As one of the greatest Greek city-states, Athens was a hub of culture: arts, theatre, learning and philosophy. Yet this vibrant city state was eventually absorbed into the Macedonian and later the Roman Empire. It lost its power, as well as its independence, and thus, the Athenian Empire could not last despite its incredible achievement in the arts and learning.

### **Alexandria**

In “A Game of Chess,” Eliot alludes to Shakespeare’s portrayal of Cleopatra. But the figure of Cleopatra is also linked to the city of Alexandria. Alexandria was the main Greek city in Egypt under the rule of Alexander the Great and the Ptolemy dynasty in the fourth century BC. It grew to be one of the largest cities in the world in addition to housing several ancient wonders: the great Library and Lighthouse of Alexandria. Despite Alexandria being an Egyptian city, it was ruled by Greeks. Cleopatra was a Greek; she was also the last ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty before Egypt fell under Roman control. And so, in due course, the library was burned in the Roman conquest of the city, and the lighthouse was destroyed in an earthquake. Alexandria,

even though it possessed landmarks indicating knowledge (the library) and technology (the lighthouse) was still subject to war, nature and decay over time.

## **Vienna**

Vienna was the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, an empire that was second in territory only to the Russian Empire and third in terms of its population, and one that lasted from 1867 until 1918. When *The Waste Land* was written in 1922, Vienna would still have been a great metropolis and an incredibly cutting-edge city. This would have been the Vienna of psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, of Vienna Succession Artists like Gustav Klimt, of philosophers of science and of cultural institutions like opera, ballet and the famous Viennese balls. However, the city's greatness is now contrasted with the fact that the empire surrounding it has now fallen. Thus, Eliot seems to hint, even modern day empires are subject to the same fate as what befell the great ancient empires. He lumps them all together in his image of a city falling: "What is the city over the mountains/ Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violent air/Falling towers" (*Waste Land* 1.371-373).

## **Carthage**

In "The Fire Sermon" portion of *The Waste Land*, the narrator says "To Carthage then I came/ Burning burning burning burning/O Lord Thou pluckest me out/O Lord Thou pluckest/ burning" (*Waste Land* 1.307-311). These lines are a clear allusion to the end of the Third Punic War when Rome, upon defeating Carthage, burned the city to ruin. Furthermore, after destroying the city, the Romans covered the land with salt, ensuring that no future crops could grow there.

Thus, in the burning of Carthage, not only was the Carthaginian Empire destroyed, but the land was also turned into a literal wasteland.

Additionally, the allusion to Phlebas the Phoenician, “a fortnight dead/ Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell/ And the profit and the loss” invokes the ruin of the Carthaginian Empire as well (*Waste Land* l.312-314). The Carthaginian Empire was a hegemony of Phoenician city states along the coast of Northern Africa and Spain that relied heavily on sea trade and merchants. When we as readers see Phlebas dead, forgetting the economic concerns of profit and loss that most likely drove him to journey via sea to begin with, the fall of the empire he was a citizen of is invoked once again. The narrator warns furthermore: “Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you” (*Waste Land* l.321). Not only are we all subject to mortality as Phlebas was, but all great cities and empires are subjected to eventual termination.

Cities exist in a variety of ways in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. Eliot includes both specific and generic instances of modern cities, as well as foreign cities that he portrays as exotic or unreal. These instances of urban environments carry with them a variety of different meanings and commentaries on the state of contemporary society. However, what all instances of cities do in Eliot’s work is to either portray the alienation of the inhabitants of the city in a poem or to alienate the reader in reading about the city. In this way, Eliot paints the city as a source of disillusionment and disconnect in modern life.



### Chapter Three: 'Home and Abroad' and Issues of Displacement

"I am still an American in some respects and an Englishman in others...[My poetry is] a combination of things. But in its sources, in its emotional springs, it comes from America."

- T.S. Eliot to the *New York Times* in 1958 and to the *Paris Review* in 1959

Although the opposition of foreign space versus domestic spaces is not as prevalent as other spatial themes in Eliot's poetry and is largely confined to his earlier work, the idea of "home and abroad" is interesting to investigate because Eliot dealt with the very same issues in his own life. Though he was born in St. Louis, Missouri and educated in Boston at Harvard, Eliot left for Europe after college, living first in Paris and then settling in London, England for the remainder of his life. His work was therefore heavily influenced by both his American and European experiences and we as readers can assume some degree of autobiographical factuality when Eliot writes of this tension in his work.

In Eliot's poetry, especially in his early poetry, he explores many instances of spatial tension resulting from tension between the categories of "home" and "abroad." Home, typically a familiar and domestic place, is a place where the narrator can be comfortable but also to some degree stagnates in a static environment. "Abroad" is represented as 'the other' but also as a space that contains new and exciting experiences. For instance, *Portrait of a Lady* begins with the setting of a domestic interior – a sitting room – in the lines "You have the scene arrange itself- as it will seem to do-/ With 'I have saved this afternoon for you';/ And four wax candles in the darkened room" in which the narrator and his companion talk about Chopin and "carefully caught regrets" (*Portrait* l. 2-4. 15). While this scene seems intimate and comfortable, there is also a sense of monotony in the lines found at the end of the first section, "Discuss the late events/ Correct our watches by the public clocks/ Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks"

(*Portrait* l.38-40). The coexistence of comfort mixed with monotony seems to characterize the domestic, familiar space of “home.”

In the next section of *Portrait of a Lady*, the idea of going abroad is introduced, but only in the form of a repressed memory. In the second section, the narrator is in the same drawing room, but now- instead of it being December- it is April and flowers are in bloom. The spring, and the regeneration of the flowers brings some of the narrator’s memories to the surface of his thoughts. The narrator says, “I smile, of course,/And go on drinking tea./ ‘Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall/My buried life, and Paris in the Spring, I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world/ To be wonderful and youthful, after all’” (*Portrait* l.50-5). The idea of going abroad, and of travelling to Paris, generates the same feeling of excitement that the narrator attains from enjoying spring. For the narrator, this suggests that the idea of travelling abroad offers opportunities for personal growth and reinvention and the excitement that goes along with those experiences.

The third section of *Portrait of a Lady* occurs months later in October when the narrator has decided to go abroad. As he is approaching his departure date, the lady asks him “And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?/ But that’s a useless question./You hardly know when you are coming back,/You will find so much to learn” (*Portrait* l.88-91). Here again, the idea of going abroad is attached, in this character’s mind, to an idea of personal growth – that travel somehow facilitates personal education or development.

Though the issue of displacement and the negotiation of home versus abroad may have contained biographical elements for Eliot himself and is certainly a legitimate area of study in Eliot’s use of space in his poetry, this theme was ultimately discarded. Only very rarely in his

later works does Eliot deal with the tension between foreign and domestic spaces. He instead will focus on one or other, often choosing the non-American location to write about. For Eliot, the issue of home and abroad became his “road not taken” as he chose to focus on other aspects of space in his poetry.

For example, the initial draft of *The Waste Land*, *He Do The Police in Different Voices*, begins not with the famous line “April is the cruellest month” but rather with an extended story of young men drinking in Boston bars. In fact, Eliot himself (or at any rate, his namesake) features prominently among these lines: “First we had a couple of feelers down at Tom’s place,/ There was old Tom, boiled to the eyes, blind” (*Facsimile and Transcript* l. 1-2). At Ezra Pound’s urging, Eliot cut out the two long passages detailing the night’s events. The resulting poem is much more universal and general and contains almost no references to America. Critic Delmore Schwartz compares Eliot to his contemporary Henry James to perhaps explain why Eliot dropped the subject of ‘home and abroad’ in his later work, suggesting that Eliot’s discarding of the theme is in fact that which makes his poetry so powerful:

James supposed that his theme was the international theme: would it not be more precise to speak of it as the transatlantic theme? This effort at a greater exactness defines what is involved in Eliot’s work. Henry James was concerned with the American in Europe. Eliot cannot help but be concerned with the whole world and all history...Eliot’s work is important in relationship to the fact that experience has become international. We have become an international people, and hence an international hero is possible (212).

While there are a variety of potential reasons behind this edit, clearly Eliot consciously cut out references to a semi-autobiographical story and the scene of his American college town. Robert Crawford offers a different take: that American cities still feature in Eliot’s poetry but are so generalized that we as readers can’t recognize them as such. Crawford writes that

Eliot recalled that the ‘yellow fog’ of Prufrock, weighing heavily on that character as it sleepily paralysed him like ether, was drawn from the fog of St. Louis Factory chimneys. But even in his childhood, this fog was seeping through the pages of Conan Doyle [whom Eliot read in childhood], just as later it would blend with the ‘brouillard sale’ of Baudelaire’s ‘Les Sept Vieillards’. Even before Eliot went to London, that city and St. Louis were beginning to blend (11).

This suggests that Eliot was less concerned with the specificity of place than with the type or model of location and thus could allow different cityscapes to blend together. Crawford also points out other ways America works its way into Eliot’s poems without necessarily referencing place: “The name Prufrock comes from St. Louis. So, more importantly, does that of the figure whom Eliot would later use as a sort of city savage: Sweeney” (27). While America certainly continued to influence Eliot’s poetry, the issue of the American in Europe is not one that Eliot labored to explore.

Another way displacement manifests itself in Eliot’s later poetry is through the motif of transportation. Transportation, the movement from one place to another, functions similarly to the change experienced by the narrator in *Portrait of a Lady* when he goes abroad. In *The Dry Salvages*, a scene of transportation is found in the third section of the poem in the lines, “When the train starts, and the passengers are settled... Fare forward, travelers! not escaping from the past/Into different lives, or into any future;/You are not the same people who left that station/ Or who will arrive at any terminus” (*Dry Salvages* l.134, 139-142). Clearly Eliot is suggesting that these travelers have undergone a change simply by traveling. Furthermore, he carries this idea further in the section in the lines “Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;/You are not those who saw the harbor/ Receding, or those who will disembark. Here between the hither and farther shore/ While time is withdrawn, consider the future/And the past with an equal mind” (*Dry Salvages* l.152-156). Indeed, in this last set of lines, Eliot almost seems to be suggesting

that a change occurs in one's mental outlook after traveling: the ability to approach both the past and present with the same evenhanded, neutral mindset. In a tone that borders on the religious, Eliot seems to reflect from the point of view of eternity in that the past, present and future are a matter of importance.

This motif is also explored in *East Coker* in one of Eliot's few Tube scenes: "Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long be-/tween stations/ And the conversation rises slowly and faces into silence/ And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen/ Leaving only the growing terror or nothing to think about" (*East Coker* l.120-4). Though at first Eliot seems to be associating vacancy of mind with the motif of transport, he goes on to state a few lines later that a vacancy of mind, when "the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing," it is able to reflect on deeper and more meaningful issues like hope, love and faith (*East Coker* l.125-6). Specifically, Eliot writes that the 'blank slate' of the mind allows the moment where "I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope/For hope would be hope for the wrong thing... there is yet faith/But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting" (*East Coker* l. 127-130). This suggests that, again, transport offers the opportunity to change oneself; it offers an opportunity of personal growth and development.

In conclusion, though the idea of displacement and issues of home and abroad are not as prominent as other spatial themes in Eliot's poetry, they are certainly worth consideration, as they both signal a potential for change in a character or the narrator and also could apply to Eliot's personal biography as well.

### Chapter Four: Human Landscapes and Habitable Spaces

Eliot's acknowledgement of rural landscapes is apparent even in the early 1930's when he wrote a series of minor poems entitled *Landscapes* featuring depictions of landscapes in both America and the United Kingdom. Highlighted are New Hampshire, Virginia and Cape Ann, Massachusetts in the United States and the town of Usk in Wales and the moor area of Rannoch, by Glen Coe, Scotland in the UK. These instances of place are often small towns, country sides or locations geographically distanced from the sprawling metropolises featured in other Eliot poems. By the mid to late 1930's and into the early 40's Eliot was working on his masterwork, *The Four Quartets*, that depicts specific landscapes with special personal meaning for him. Indeed, the specificity of Eliot's landscape poems is distinct from his attempt to universalize the city in *The Waste Land* and other earlier poems, and the construction of the landscape poems evidences this. Steve Ellis writes that, "Eliot is aware of the dangers of 'rootlessness' in both a linguistic and a geographical sense... the *Quartets* are largely set in a specific, though provisional, English time and place" (27). The variety and number of landscapes present in Eliot's work lend themselves to be divided into two categories: human landscapes and habitable spaces versus inhuman landscapes and hostile spaces, meaning places where humans could survive as opposed to places where they could not. However, some landscapes can appear in both categories. For instance, some rivers seem threatening and hostile, but when Eliot mentions the Thames River running through London, clearly it is a domesticated river. Or take for instance the mountains in the last section of *The Waste Land*, "What The Thunder Said," that make up a hostile environment that is very dissimilar from the mountains that Marie remembers in the first section of *The Waste Land*, "The Burial of the Dead." Thus, Marie's mountains are discussed in this chapter; the mountains preventing rain in the next.

The shift to landscape poetry in Eliot's later career is a marked change from the urban environments, city streets and interior and exterior parts of buildings that fill his earlier work like the *Preludes*, *Prufrock* and *The Waste Land*. And yet Nancy Duvall Hargrove points out that the importance of setting in Eliot's poetry remains constant:

Landscape, or setting, is one of the most important of Eliot's basic recurring symbols, for it reflects with particular sensitivity both the outer and inner worlds... Eliot uses landscape to represent much more than scenery or setting; it is a means of defining or suggesting emotional or moral states, a means of controlling and manipulating feeling (11).

Hargrove actually goes on to offer her own interpretation of what the various landscapes mean in Eliot's poetry:

Five major clusters of landscapes are found throughout Eliot's poetry from beginning to end; as they have highly complex symbolic content and form the core of the landscape symbolism. These are the city (boredom, triviality, sterility), the country (release, fertility, rebirth), the desert (chaos, terror, emptiness), the garden (ecstasy, innocence, serenity), and the sea or river, with the associations [of] eternity, destruction, creation, mystery...life...death...sterility ...and physical beauty (15).

For the purposes of this chapter, the country, garden, river and some mountains will be discussed.

Again, in the *Landscape* poems and *The Four Quartets*, Eliot moves away from the impulse to 'universalize' his poetry, as he did in *The Waste Land* through the use of multiple languages and references to many cities. Here he concentrates on American and English settings. The change of subject matter may be linked to Eliot's conversion to Anglicanism in the late 1920's or could simply be the musings of a poet getting older and reflecting on nature, time and memory. Steve Ellis notes that "It is true that the American and English landscapes that figure in the poem[s] have widely differing significations for Eliot, but the *Quartets* attempt to synthesize

the connotations of either side of the Atlantic into a unified Christian outlook” (78). Ellis connects Eliot’s shift in poetic matter to a shift in his religious views. Furthermore, Eliot’s conversion to Christianity may have made him want to focus more on countries that are historically Christian, like America and England. Gone are the references in his later work to Jerusalem, Alexandria and Athens.

### **Landscapes and The Four Quartets**

The *Landscapes* collection is one of minor poems, but they are significant because they can be read as a sort of rough draft of *The Four Quartets*. Burnt Norton is a country house near Chipping Campden in North Gloucestershire. Eliot visited it in the summer of 1934. “New Hampshire” parallels *Burnt Norton* in its subject matter of time, shown in the lines, “Twenty years and the spring is over;/To-day grieves, to-morrow grieves” and the reference to “children’s voices in the orchard” (*Landscapes* l.6-7, 1). Additionally, “Rannoch, by Glencoe” echoes *Burnt Norton* in its reference to memory: “Memory is strong/Beyond the bone” (*Landscapes* l. 45-6).

East Coker is a village in Somerset, England from which Eliot’s ancestors emigrated to Boston in 1660. Eliot visited there in 1936-7 and is also buried there. His epitaph is lines from the poem, “In my beginning is my end/ In my end is my beginning”. The evocative lines in *East Coker* “I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope/For hope would be hope for the wrong thing...” propose a negation of hope that has origins in the *Landscape* poems (*East Coker* l.127-8). These lines are echoed in “Usk” in the commands “Do not suddenly break the branch, or/Hope to find/ The white hart behind the white well” (*Landscapes* l.26-28).



The Dry Salvages is, as the note preceding the poem states, ‘a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts’. The Eliot family vacationed in Cape Ann during summers when Eliot was a boy. “Virginia” parallels *The Dry Salvages* due to the reference to the river: “red river, red river... delay, decay. Living, living,/ Never moving. Ever moving” (*Landscapes* l. 13-22). Also, “Cape Ann” draws an obvious parallel to *The Dry Salvages* when one considers that the Dry Salvages are in fact rocks off the coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts.

Little Gidding is a village in Huntingdonshire. Eliot visited it in 1936. “Usk” can also be linked to *Little Gidding* because of the setting in a church or chapel. In “Usk,” the lines clearly indicate that it is set in a “hermit’s chapel” that the “grey light meets the green air” (*Landscapes* l.35-36). In *Little Gidding*, the references are not so overt, but Eliot alludes to being in a church with the lines “You are here to kneel/Where prayer has been valid” and makes references to a sanctuary and choir (*Little Gidding* l. 47-8, 78). Additionally, Little Gidding has ties to Eliot’s Christian religion. As Nancy Gish points out, “Little Gidding was a religious community founded and led by Nicholas Ferrar... It was Anglican, not monastic, but as in a monastery, the people led lives of ritualized prayer and worship” (112). The possibility that Eliot’s change in landscape subject matter was caused by his religious conversion is supported by the clear Anglican ties to the community of Little Gidding.

### **Countryside**

Eliot plays with panoramic views of the countryside to oppose the urban environments and waste lands that he includes in some of his other poetry. In *East Coker*, Eliot paints a picture of a Medieval or Renaissance wedding taking place in an “open field” as people of the

countryside village take part in dancing and “rustic laughter” as they celebrate “the association of man and woman/In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie” (*East Coker* l.24,36,29-30). Here Eliot contrasts this joyful Medieval or Renaissance wedding in nature to a subject he explores often in his poems dealing with the urban wastelands: sex without love outside or within marriage and the harmful effects that those empty sexual acts have on the people performing them. Steve Ellis considers this celebratory scene to be one of the most compelling in *The Four Quartets*, as he argues that “There is, in short, not much life in the *Quartets*, but what there is the dancers of ‘East Coker’ are at the centre of” (103).

## Mountains

Mountains appear in Eliot’s poetry in various forms in *The Waste Land*. The mountains Marie remembers at the beginning of the poem in “The Burial of the Dead” are included in this chapter because these are mountains as used by city folk; the holiday resort Marie remembers is a place where the mountains are civilized. Indeed, it is the urban environment Marie finds herself in at the beginning of the poem that makes her remember these mountains. Marie recounts her childhood memories, remembering being in the Hofgarten, then escaping the rain in the café, and finally remembering being with her cousin the archduke and going sledding: “he took me out on a sled,/And I was frightened. He said, Marie,/Marie, hold on tight. And down we went./ In the mountains, there you feel free” (*The Waste Land* l.10-17). Here, the mountains are presented in direct contrast to the urban environment that Marie finds herself in, both because the mountains are figures of her memory and because she directly states that “In the mountains, there you feel free,” implying that in the urban environment she now finds herself in, she does not consider herself ‘free’ (*Waste Land* l.17).

## Rivers

While images of the sea in Eliot's poetry seem to be connected to inhuman landscapes and hostile spaces, some instances of rivers, like the Thames, seem to be connected with spaces that are habitable by humans. In the third section of *The Waste Land*, "The Fire Sermon," the image of a canopy of leaves extending out over the river and allowing the river to flow gently is suggested by the lines "The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf/Clutch and sink into the wet bank... Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song" (*Waste Land* l.173-176). This is the Thames of Spenser's *Prothalamion* and both in Spenser's work and in Eliot's, this is a completely domesticated river, degraded in a way by its intimate connection to civilization. The river here is portrayed as a very unthreatening, gentle force, but a life force nonetheless. The Thames, the river that runs through central London, is a specific river that is well-known in both modern and earlier times. Despite the alienating quality of modern, urban life, the Thames continues to flow. This is the Thames that serves as a thoroughfare for the city of London. "The Fire Sermon" provides examples of this. Though the river nymphs are gone, other river creatures like the rat that "crept softly through the vegetation/Dragging its slimy belly on the bank" are still present around the Thames (*Waste Land* l.187-8). Life does still exist in modern society, but rats are a poor substitute indeed for the fantastical river nymphs of Greek mythology or of Renaissance poetry like Spenser's. From his perch on the bank of the Thames, our narrator can hear the echoes of life, "the sound of horns and motors, which shall bring/Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring" (*Waste Land* l.197-99). Though he can hear modern life being conducted, through the sound of automobiles, our narrator does not directly participate in it, emphasizing again the alienating and isolating effect of modern urban life. Furthermore, in these lines Eliot alludes to his own mythology of Sweeney as a modern lout and suggests, through the

incorporation of lines from an Australian drinking song (“O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter/And on her daughter/They wash their feet in soda water”) that Mrs. Porter is a woman of ill repute (*Waste Land* l.199-201). Here Eliot directly contrasts the modern-day meeting of Sweeney and Mrs. Porter on the banks of the Thames with the pastoral myth of Actaeon stumbling across the bathing Diana on the banks of a Grecian river. Instead of the pair of mythological lovers, the reader witnesses the meeting of a degenerate modern working-class man and a prostitute.

Further on in “The Fire Sermon,” our narrator encounters the Thames again, only this river is polluted as a cost of urban industrialization: “the river sweats/Oil and tar... The barges wash/Drifting logs/Down Greenwich reach/Past the Isle of Dogs/ Weialala leia/ Wallala leialala” (*Waste Land* l.266-76). Not only is the river personified as an object harmed by modern industry (the river ‘sweats oil and tar’), but in the lines “Weialala leia/ Wallala leialala,” Eliot references the Rhinemaidens of Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* who lament their loss of the Rhinegold, stolen by the dwarf Alberich, who can only claim its power after he renounces love. Here Eliot draws a parallel between the power-hungry modern society that has renounced nature and natural life for industry and technological progress and Alberich who renounces love for power. Eliot reinforces this parallel by repeating the same lines of “Weialala leia/ Wallala leialala” after referencing Queen Elizabeth and the first Earl of Leicester, Robert Dudley, historical lovers who never married, perhaps because of considerations surrounding Elizabeth’s power and position as Queen of England. She too renounced love in favor of power.

In the final section of *The Waste Land*, “What the Thunder Said,” the narrator presents us with the problem of being in the desert, but of having no water. Indeed, in this world, even the

great Ganges River is running low. “Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves/ Waited for rain, while the black clouds/ Gathered far distant,” the narrator describes the parched landscape (*Waste Land* l. 395-397). The lack of water in the Ganges River stands in for the lack of nature and humanity from modern urban life. As the storm clouds gather and eventually rain over the land, the narrator offers a glimpse of hope as he tells us that “I sat upon the shore [of the river]/ Fishing, with the arid plain behind me/ Shall I at least set my lands in order?/ London Bridge is falling down” (*Waste Land* l. 423-426). The narrator has the opportunity to glean food from the river and sustain his own life. Additionally, the rain will cause the river to flow more strongly and perhaps bring nature’s presence back to London. The possibility of order is suggested by the narrator’s question “Shall I at least set my lands in order?” and the idea of nature triumphing over urban modernity is found in the image of London Bridge falling down and into the Thames. Thus, although the lack of water in *The Waste Land* presents a desolate view of modern urban life throughout the poem, the arrival of rain and water and the river at the end of the poem may be read by the reader as a source of hope.

Eliot’s use of the river image extends to *The Four Quartets* as well. *Little Gidding*, too, suggests that the end of a journey (like the quest for water in the barren landscape of *The Waste Land*) can be found in a river. At the end of the poem, Eliot writes “We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time” and suggest that this ‘place’ could be found “at the source of the longest river” surrounded by the noise of a “waterfall,” “children in the apple-tree... heard, half-heard in the stillness between two waves of the sea” (*Little Gidding* l. 242-254). The emphasis on bodies of water, especially rivers as the beginning and ending place for life echoes the idea present in *The Waste Land* of water as a life-giving force and source of hope.

Nancy Gish suggests that the force of the river may not be just a symbol of water or even life, but rather a symbol of time. However, the type of time the river keeps is very different than our concept of civilized time. Rivers function as a natural measurement of time because of their natural cycles -their high and low cycles- as distinct from clocks which are an invention of civilization. “Rather than present a concept of time and depict it through imagery,” Gish writes “the first movement of ‘The Dry Salvages’ contrasts and comments on two images of time, the river and the sea” (108). The river’s sense of natural time is contrasted with civilization’s sense of unnatural time and reminds us that the cycle of human life is tied to the natural cycle of time, like seasons, rainfall and the rise and fall of rivers.

Water, nature and life are all around us, argues the poet. “The river is within us, the sea is all about us” states the poet, and reinforces this idea by stating that “The sea has many voices,/Many gods and many voices”( *Dry Salvages* l. 15-6, 24-6). Water is here presented as a very plentiful and obvious component of Earth, and yet modern society still manages to miss its presence. This rejection of nature has caused modern society to experience life but to not understand it, or as the poet says “We had the experience but missed the meaning” ( *Dry Salvages* l. 95).

## **Gardens**

What may arguably be one of the most famous images of a garden appears in *Burnt Norton*, as a rose-garden is evoked in the lines, “ Footfalls echo in the memory/Down the passage which we did not take/Towards the door we never opened/Into the rose garden” ( *Burnt Norton* l. 11-14). Eliot goes on to describe the rose garden as a place where “the bird called, in response to/The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,” where there are “roses [that]/ Had the

look of flowers that are looked at” and where there is a pool “filled with water out of sunlight/And the lotos rose, quietly” (*Burnt Norton* l.28-38). Clearly this rose-garden is associated with abstract concepts like memory, since to get to it, the reader must journey in his or her memory down a passage created of his or her life choices, but it is a place described by a celebration of beauty and of nature. The rose garden and the passage function both as a figurative and metaphorical image for an abstract idea, but also as a visualizable place that can create a concrete image for the viewer. The beautiful and detailed descriptions of the rose garden Eliot offers us suggests that it is to be read as a positive place.

Furthermore, Eliot explicitly links the rose garden to not only memory, but time as well. In the following lines, he explores this relationship: “Time past and time future/ Allow but a little consciousness...But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,/The moment in the harbour where the rain beat...Be remembered” (*Burnt Norton* l. 85-91). Time is presented as a sort of container that is able to hold both the past and present. The reader is either inside or outside of Time. In this way, Eliot personifies Time. Eliot extends the idea of the past and present at the end of the poem, by highlighting the beauty and the importance of the present moment: “Sudden in a shaft of sunlight/ Even while the dust moves/There rises the hidden laughter/Of children in the foliage/Quick now, here, now, always-/Ridiculous the waste sad time/Stretching before and after” (*Burnt Norton* l. 172-178). Here, Eliot uses words like “sudden” and the repetition of “now” to stress the short existence of the present moment and the importance of noticing it before it is lost in the “time stretching before and after”. Nancy Gish acknowledges that “the desire to transcend time, embodied in a rose-garden transfigured beyond any sensual reality, is a major impetus in the poem” (94).

In *East Coker*, Eliot again refers to the rose garden of *Burnt Norton* where the laughing children hide in the leaves of the garden. “The laughter in the garden,” writes Eliot, “echoed ecstasy/Not Lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony/Of death and birth” (*East Coker* l.133-137). Here, the garden is tied not only to time, but to death and birth also. The beauty of the garden and of the present moment certainly exists, but it is subject to the same force of Time that controls the whole of one’s life- including birth and death.

Furthermore, as Eliot points out at the end of *East Coker*, as one gets closer to death, “the world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated/Of dead and living. Not the intense moment/Isolated, with no before and after,/But a lifetime burning in every moment... There is a time for the evening under starlight” (*East Coker* l.194-203). As one is moved by Time towards death, the intensity of the present moment and the shaft of sunlight fades into quiet evenings at dusk. The spatial move from the sunny, lush garden to the evening under the starlight parallels the move from one’s prime of life to one’s quiet and peaceful old age.

The move from youth to old age continues in the other two poems of the *Four Quartets*. In *Little Gidding* Eliot writes that “Ash on an old man’s sleeve/ Is all the ash the burnt roses leave” in lines that connect the rose of *Burnt Norton*’s rose garden now to old age and death, represented by ‘ash’(l. 56-7). Furthermore, when Eliot writes that “The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree/Are of equal duration” he solidifies this association (*Little Gidding* l.235-6). A yew is a small evergreen tree native to Europe that is often planted in churchyards in England and Ireland and is sometimes considered a symbol of life and death. Because of its association with churchyards, the yew is related to death. Thus, the moment of the rose in the garden, part of Eliot’s extended metaphor for the present moment and the prime of life, is now



equated to the yew, old age and eventually death. This idea is extended into *The Dry Salvages* in the lines “We, content at the last/If our temporal reversion nourish/ (Not too far from the yew-tree)/The life of significant soil” (*Dry Salvages* l.234-237). These lines allude to a burial in a church graveyard near the yew tree, where the body decomposes and returns nutrients back to the soil so other forms of life can grow. The horror of death and of a burial is juxtaposed with the phrase “significant soil” that suggest the regenerative and cyclic character of life and of the natural world. Thus, Eliot has come full circle in his metaphor (from life to death to life) by alluding to the cyclical nature of life itself.

The garden had already been evoked by Eliot in *The Waste Land*, only this instance of the garden is associated not with time, but with loss. The very first lines of the poem introduce this idea, “April is the cruellest month, breeding/Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/ Memory and desire, stirring/ Dull roots with spring rain” (*Waste Land* l.1-4). The cruelty of April is found in the regenerative property of spring that attempts to bring feeling back to a world that has frozen due to suffering, death and loss. But to feel anything in this world would be to feel pain and grief. Further in “The Burial of the Dead”, the hyacinth girl and her lover talk about their dying relationship. ““You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;” she tells him (*Waste Land* l.35). Then her lover confesses that “I could not/ Speak, and my eyes failed,” describing a scene that fades out and looks into light, the earmarks of a mystical experience (*Waste Land* l.38-9). The hyacinth garden then becomes a place where the lovers could demonstrate their affection (the man giving the hyacinth girl the flowers and she receiving them), but a place that can no longer exist because the lover’s focus is on his moment of illumination, his moment of reflection rather than on their relationship. The hyacinth garden stands for what they had but have no longer; it is a place associated with loss.

Towards the end of Eliot's poetic career, habitable and inhabited landscapes became prominent features of his poetry. The progression of Eliot's work from the urban environments of *Prufrock*, *The Waste Land*, and the *Preludes* to *The Four Quartets* where four personally significant and natural settings are highlighted suggest that we as readers can deduce a change in interest in location and subject matter in Eliot's poetic mind. The human landscapes discussed in this chapter diverge from his early work because these landscapes are much more oriented toward nature and are much more personal for Eliot; they are all places that are meaningful in some way to him: Burnt Norton, a place he visited in the summer of 1934; East Coker, a village where Eliot's ancestors lived; The Dry Salvages, a place where the Eliot family vacationed in his youth and Little Gidding, a place where Eliot visited in 1936. Thus, these human landscapes are given a positive connotation because of their connection to a regenerative type of nature and a strong personal meaning while the inhuman landscapes discussed in the next chapter lack the regenerative and meaningful qualities and are thus given a negative connotation.

## Chapter Five: Inhuman Landscapes and Hostile Spaces

Eliot makes use of human landscapes and habitable spaces, certainly, in his poetry (as discussed in Chapter 4), but he also employs inhuman landscapes and hostile spaces in his poems as well. It can be inferred then, that these inhuman spaces must be meant to function in a way that the human and habitable spaces cannot. Nancy Duvall Hargrove argues, in *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, that “the physical landscapes become the inner landscapes of mind, heart and spirit” in Eliot’s poetry (211). Thus the inhuman landscapes, along with the human ones- since the two categories of landscapes make sense in opposition to each other- occurring in Eliot’s poems must be read with the idea of the other environment in mind. If one type of landscape appears in the foreground of a poem, the other type creates a sort of backdrop for the reader’s cognitive map of the poem. Indeed, I will again mention the breakdown Hargrove offers of each particular landscape motif Eliot utilizes: the city as representational of “boredom” and “sterility;” the country as “release” and “rebirth;” the desert as “terror” and “emptiness;” the garden as “innocence” and “serenity;” and the sea or river indicating “eternity, destruction, creation, mystery...life...[and] beauty” (15). The barren and unfriendly landscapes, then, evidence a mindset much like that Eliot connects to the urban environment: a soulless and routine perspective that creates a sterile existence.

### Vacant lots

In the *Preludes*, Eliot introduces the idea of spatial overlap of the countryside and urban environment in the form of vacant lots. These vacant and abandoned spaces are quite literally waste land spaces intruding into the cities; where buildings once stood now weeds grow in an imposition of the city on the surrounding countryside or an attempt of the countryside to reclaim

what it lost. In the first section of the *Preludes*, we see “the grimy scraps of withered leaves about your feet/And newspapers from vacant lots” (*Preludes* l.6-8). In these vacant lots, though nature is present in what was once an urban space, it is present in a decayed and dirty form. Furthermore, in the last section of the *Preludes*, the lots appear again: “The worlds revolve like ancient women/Gathering fuel in vacant lots” (*Preludes* l.53-54). In a metaphorical description of cosmic space, Eliot introduces the lots again: a space that exists between the sterile urban wasteland and a regenerative natural space, shown by the fact that the women can find something of substance- fuel- in these vacant lots.

## Rivers

In *The Dry Salvages*, Eliot fixates on the image and life-force of the river, but the river he mentions is not a domesticated river like the Thames. The poet writes, “I think the river/ Is a strong brown god” but also laments that “the brown god is almost forgotton/By the dwellers in cities-ever, however, implacable,/ Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder/Of what men chose to forget” (*Dry Salvages* l.1-9). Here, Eliot portrays the river, and water, as a powerful life-sustaining force to be regarded as a deity. However, the men and women of modern society, and especially modern urban society, have forgotten one of the key elements, water, that keeps them alive. Instead, they are “worshippers of the machine” (*Dry Salvages* l. 10). This estrangement with their own lives and bodies is just one of the discords of the modern urban life.

## Mountains

Mountains appear consistently in *The Waste Land*, but the mountains that appear in the last section, “What the Thunder Said,” are not the cultivated mountains Marie remembers from her childhood in “Burial of the Dead.” Eliot offers the image of a storm approaching over far-away mountains in the lines “After the torchlight red on sweaty faces... The shouting and the crying...and reverberation/Of thunder of spring over distant mountains” (*Waste Land* l.322-7). The mountains can be seen as a barrier to the approach of the storm that will bring water, creating a menacing image of the mountains that is more consistent with how they are portrayed in the remainder of “What the Thunder Said.”

“Here is no water but only rock,” laments the narrator “... The road winding above among the mountains/Which are mountains of rock without water” (*Waste Land* l.331-334). The lack of water, a life-giving force in the poem, present in the mountains now suggests that they are barren environments devoid of life and incapable of sustaining it. Indeed, they are as much of a waste land as the modern urban environment is. The narrator echoes this as he continues: “Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit/ Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit/There is not even silence in the mountains/But dry sterile thunder without rain/There is not even solitude in the mountains/But red sullen faces sneer and snarl” (*Waste Land* l.339-344). The mountains are portrayed as dead, sterile and full of hellish sneers and snarls. Despite the fact that the narrator is in the physical space of the mountains, they create a dangerous and threatening environment in general.

Eliot then draws a parallel between the hostile environment of the mountains and that of the ‘unreal city’ in the lines “What is the city over the mountains/Cracks and reforms and bursts

in the violet air/Falling towers/ Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/Vienna London/ Unreal” (*Waste Land* l.371-376). Here he is equating the sterile and bleak nature of urban and mountain environments: the towers of cities look like mountains. It is in the mountains that the narrator experiences hallucinations of surrealistic images like seeing a mysterious woman appear with long black hair who then plays music using her hair as strings. In addition, the narrator witnesses bats taking flight into the dusk and bells tolling reminding us of what has been. The mountains are a terrifying environment: a place where real objects do not exist, but rather everything is mirage or hallucination. Yet suddenly, “in this decayed hole among the mountains... the grass is singing... in a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust/ Bringing rain” (*Waste Land* l.385-394). The storm has finally arrived, and the thunder is not the sterile thunder of before, but rather it introduces the coming of rain. Life begins to return to the poem.

At this point, Eliot relates the tale of when “Ganga was sunken” and the “black clouds/ gathered far distant, over Himavant” and brought with them rain (*Waste Land* l.395-399). Here the great river Ganges in India was running low, much like the previous state of the poem, but the black storm clouds brought with them rain to make the Ganges flow again. Through Himavant, the Hindu god of snow and a personification of the Himalayan mountains, not only is the image of mountains evoked, but here occurs the last instance of religion finding its way into *The Waste Land*. While Christian imagery and references and Christ figures abound in the previous portions of *The Waste Land*, this reference is to a non-Christian religion and is more explicit than the other references. This is a different religion brought into the poem and is brought into the poem in a positive way. Unlike the other degraded and disregarded religious moments, this religious reference offers the possibility of redemption. Here, in bringing both elements of water (or life) and religion into the poem at the same time, Eliot appears to be

equating the two. Furthermore, while some of Eliot's earlier allusions to great mythological figures worked to distance them from their present counterparts, here Eliot does the opposite. By invoking Himavant, he raises the present situation of the return of water up to the same exalted mythological level.

## **Deserts**

Eliot writes in the first section of *The Waste Land*, "The Burial of the Dead," of a space comprised of a "heap of broken images" that represents the fragmentation of modern society and that exists in the desert "where the sun beats,/And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,/ And the dry stone no sound of water. Only/ There is shadow under this red rock" (*Waste Land* l.22-25). Further on in the poem, this same image of the barren, rocky land is repeated in "What the Thunder Said" only this time it is portrayed as "a complex nightmare landscape revealing a vision of the ultimate chaos and disintegration of the spirit" that mirrors "the landscape of the protagonist's soul" (Hargrove 82-3). The following lines illustrate this: "Here is water but only rock/Rock and no water and the sandy road/ The road winding above among the mountains/ Which are mountains of rock without water" (*Waste Land* l.331-334). Thus, the abstract idea in the beginning of *The Waste Land* of a 'heap of broken images' that is discussed in the same context as the early desert scene is now mirrored in the hostile desert environment at the end of the poem. Neither place (modern society or the desert), Eliot states, is anywhere to live.

## Sea

While rivers in Eliot's poetry can exist as either domesticated or hostile spaces, the sea seems to suggest, especially in Eliot's early work, an inhuman space. For example, in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, the sea is mentioned as a space divorced from meaningful human existence. First, Prufrock laments that "I should have been a pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas," imagining himself as being something primitive, violent and aggressive and suggesting that this alternative existence would be preferable to his present life (*Prufrock* l.73-74). When the sea is mentioned again, the inhabitants mentioned are again not human. Instead, they are the half-human, half- sea-creature mermaids. Prufrock states, "I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach./ I have hear the mermaids singing, each to each./ I do not think that they will sing to me" (*Prufrock* l.125-7). The impossibility of communication between Prufrock and the mermaids suggests a sense of disconnection between the fantastical, mythological environment of the mermaid-populated sea and human reality. Prufrock continues on in his musing: "I have seen them riding seaward on the waves... We have lingered in the chambers of the sea/ By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown/ Till human voices wake us, and we drown" (*Prufrock* l.125-133). Again, Eliot not only portrays the sea here as an environment only the mermaids (and not the very mortal Prufrock) can inhabit, but also as an escapist fantasy for modern society that cannot be fully realized.

In the fourth section of *The Waste Land*, "Death by Water," the sea appears again. In this instance, it is a menacing and vicious force, as the character we see, Phlebas the Phoenician, has drowned in the sea. Furthermore, Eliot depicts Phlebas as rotting away under the water: "A current under sea/ Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell/ He passed the stages of his



age and youth/ Entering the whirlpool” (*Waste Land* l.315-318). The sea is not only capable of killing humans, but it will tear the flesh from their bones and scatter their remains in the currents. Nancy Duvall Hargrove writes that “the whirlpool, being an irresistible force of destruction, seems to me symbolic of final and total annihilation through death” (82). Clearly, these waters are not welcoming. The presence of death is again emphasized in Eliot’s warning to the reader that “O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,/ Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you” (*Waste Land* l.320-321). Here, the sea is connected with death and with humankind’s impending mortality. This idea appears earlier in the poem as Madame Sosostris warns “Fear death by water” (*Waste Land* l.55).

In *The Dry Salvages*, Eliot describes two settings, the Mississippi River and the Dry Salvages in Massachusetts that “are used to symbolize the permanent agony of sin and death in man’s time” (Hargrove 178). When Eliot writes, “the sea is all about us;/The sea is the land’s edge,” he alludes to a continual close proximity between humanity and the potentially destructive force of the sea (*Dry Salvages* l.15-16). Eliot goes on to write that “the sea has many voices,/Many gods and many voices” such as the “sea howl” and the “sea yelp” which combine to form “the menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,/The distant rote in the granite teeth” (*Dry Salvages* l.15-16, 24-32). These images of the breaking waves as gnashing teeth clearly depict the sea as a hostile environment with the howls, yelps and gnashing teeth suggesting a type of Hell.

In the fourth section of *The Dry Salvages*, Eliot deals with the sea again to write a “lyrical prayer to the Virgin... [that is] a prayer not only for fishermen and their families but for all men, for all sojourners in time. Again, the themes of the danger, suffering and death in the human

experience are sounded” (Hargrove 179). Eliot asks Mary to “Pray for all those who are in ships, those/Whose business has to do with fish... Repeat a prayer also on behalf of/Women who have seen their sons or husbands setting forth, and not returning...Also pray for those who were in ships, and/Ended their voyage on the sand, in the sea’s lips” (*Dry Salvages* l.173-184). Here, Eliot uses the literal danger and suffering experienced by seamen to illustrate a meaning that can metaphorically be extended to humanity as well as offering religion as a possible means of redemption.

### **Cosmic Space**

Eliot utilizes the image of huge expanses of space, especially cosmic space in his poetry to suggest the universality of his subject matter. In *East Coker*, Eliot invokes an image of the heavens in the lines “thunder rolled by the rolling stars/ Simulates triumphal cars/ Deployed in constellated wars/ Scorpion fights against the Sun/ Until the Sun and Moon go down/ Comets weep and Leonids fly/ Hunt the heavens and the plains/ Whirled in a vortex that shall bring/The world to that destructive fire/ Which burns before ice-cap reigns” (*East Coker* l.59-68). The warring heavens are clearly set in opposition to Earth, indeed, they function as a threat to Earth, as a force that could bring an Apocalyptic destruction to life on this planet.

Further on in *East Coker*, Eliot writes of the spaces inhabited by cosmopolitan people like “captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters... generous patrons of art” and calls these spaces “vacant” because they are divorced from nature and because they exist in the mechanical and routine-based urban environment (*East Coker* l. 103-105). Eliot reinforces his description of these vacant spaces by describing them metaphorically as cosmic spaces: “O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,/ The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant”

(*East Coker* l.102-103). By equating the vacant urban environment that the cosmopolitan people inhabit to a cosmic space, Eliot thus presents the cosmos as a space that is the opposite of nature.

In *The Dry Salvages*, Eliot mentions in the fifth section of the poem that “when there is distress of nations and perplexity/Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road/ Men’s curiosity searches past and future/And clings to that dimension” by examining “the usual pastimes and drugs, and features of the press” like attempting “to communicate with Mars, converse with spirits” and engage in other sorts of activities related to the occult (*Dry Salvages* l.188-204). Thus when people become disconcerted and disillusioned with modern life, they tend to look to cosmic spaces or cosmic powers for diversion or relief.

In *Little Gidding*, Eliot utilizes cosmic space to zoom out to the universal before he narrows in on his specific subject- Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire, England- in the lines “There are other places/Which also are the world’s end, some at the sea jaws,/Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city-/ But this is the nearest, in place and time,/ Now and in England” (*Little Gidding* l.36-37). Later he repeats a similar idea in the lines “Here, the intersection of the timeless moment/ Is England and nowhere. Never and always” (*Little Gidding* l.54-55, 124-5). Eliot’s use of expansive cosmic space mirrors *Little Gidding*’s universal subject matter of the cyclical nature of life and death.

### **Expansive Geography**

The image Eliot paints in the first section of *The Waste Land*, “The Burial of the Dead” is of the whole Earth thawing. “April is the cruellest month” because it brings with it “spring rain” that allows nature to regenerate in the form of lilacs and sprouting tubers but that does not seem

to touch human society (*Waste Land* l. 1-2, 7). Here, Eliot speaks in highly generalized statements of how “Winter kept us warm, covering/ Earth in forgetful snow” and how April’s spring rain mixes “Memory and desire” in an implied society as a whole (*Waste Land* l.1-7). Echoed later in the section, Eliot refers not to a specific character, but groups all mankind under the label of “Son of Man,” a being that can only know “a heap of broken images” (*Waste Land* l.20-22). The Great War that ended just before Eliot wrote *The Waste Land* produced a literal fragmenting effect on society that Eliot made figurative as a ‘waste land’. Thus, there is an implied connection between the space of a waste land and the war. Eliot seems to be suggesting that not only can humans not exist in hostile landscapes, but also that mankind as whole may not be able to exist at all if it continues in such a state of violence and warfare.

Inhuman landscapes and hostile spaces feature conspicuously in the poetry of T. S. Eliot. They are distinct from the previously discussed and even more conspicuous human landscapes and habitable spaces that occur frequently throughout Eliot’s poetry. And yet one type of environment cannot be reviewed without giving its opposite consideration also. Human landscapes and inhuman landscapes, for Eliot, function together in a sort of total system to portray his vision of the world. While one landscape may take the foreground in a particular poem or section of a poem, the background and foreground image work together to fully illustrate the picture or image Eliot is trying to relate to his reader; his poetic vision could not fully be achieved without both types of landscape. Thus, while the inhuman landscapes discussed in this chapter may function as a distinct opposite from the human landscapes discussed before, they are part of the same poetic vision- like a photographic positive and negative image- that Eliot creates for his readers.

## Conclusion

In one of his *Four Quartets*, *Little Gidding*, Eliot writes “We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time.” The idea of a journey ending where it began seems a perfect bookend to Eliot’s statement that “Home is where one starts from” (*East Coker* l. 194). I found myself in a similar position with the project. I had started in one place: with a list of theoretical readings, a bibliography full of books by Eliot scholars, and an outline organized by spatial categories. I ended with the same readings, the same bibliography, and the same outline. Only now I had five distinct chapters that each dealt with one spatial instance specifically. And although they seemed a little disparate at first (really, what do inhuman landscapes have to do with the tension between home and abroad?), they offered answers and a new meaning to the questions I had posed at the beginning of this project and had sought to answer.

I found indeed, that space is meaningful in Eliot’s poetry. As banal a conclusion as that sounds at first, we must consider that Eliot is the poet who claims, in his notes to *The Waste Land* (via his character Tiresias) that all of the female characters are the same, that “all woman are one woman.” Whether or not this is actually true of Eliot’s characters is debatable, but note how Eliot never says anything of the sort regarding space. There is never a note that ‘all spaces are the same space’ or ‘all geographical locations are the same location’. What I found in this project is what Eliot seems to be fully aware of himself: that space is an indisputably important aspect of his poetry.

Furthermore, I found that each spatial instance, treated as its own entity had a meaning in and of itself. Interior spaces (like bedrooms, living rooms, even pubs) seemed to be connected to

a positive meaning for Eliot; these spaces offered a glimpse into the real psyches and thoughts of his poetic characters. Exterior spaces, like street scenes, functioned much the opposite. They were attached to a negative meaning because they represented a space in which people often conform to what society expects or what everyone else is doing. It is in the exterior spaces that people create “a face to meet the faces that you meet,” as Eliot describes it in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (*Prufrock* 1.27). Liminal spaces, much like how they physically mediate between interior and exterior spaces, also seem to hover between a positive and negative meaning in Eliot’s eyes. Additionally, Eliot employs the city, or urban landscape, to suggest his disillusionment with the modern urban environment. The barrenness of his cityscapes corresponds to what Eliot sees as an emotional and social loss. He works through three motifs of the specific city, the generic cityscape and the exoticized city, but utilizes all to portray the alienating effect of urbanity on modern society. With issues of home and abroad, Eliot portrays a character attached to the romantic notion that going abroad may in some way liberate or save him, but Eliot doesn’t expressly endorse this idea: travel may indeed change someone, but it doesn’t have to. Finally, while the inclusion of landscapes in his poetry (both human and inhuman) signals a departure from Eliot’s early work that was mainly concerned with the urban landscape, both types of landscapes are tied to different meanings. Human landscapes are places Eliot sees as full of positive meaning and suggestive of the return of humanity to nature, and thereby making regeneration and redemption possible. Inhuman landscapes are spaces where Eliot sees little meaning and portrays them as more akin to the cityscapes- places where humanity exists but exists in an environment of alienation and disillusion.

In addition to finding some sort of meaning attached to each space individually, space in Eliot’s poetry often interacts systematically. This was perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this

project for me: realizing that space and geography functioned together as a whole in Eliot's work. Much like Hallgren's parody of an entire amusement park composed of different spaces, space functions as an integrated complex in Eliot's work. The categories of spaces that I chose functioned together in a set of tensions and reinforcements that created this total system. Each space is, in a sense, what the others are not. At the same time, however, one type of space could not exist without the others.

Interior spaces allow the reader a glimpse of a character's interiority, but the reader can only recognize that certain thoughts or actions symbolize interiority because the reader sees the very same character act or think differently as he or she conforms to societal expectations in the exterior world. Interior spaces not only showcase the character's inner world but also provide a more effective way of showcasing the effect the exterior world has on the same poetic character. Similarly, if there were no distinction between interior space and exterior space (even something as physically obvious as a wall or stairway), thresholds would not exist and characters' behavior- be it awkward, insecure or uncertain- in liminal space would never be seen.

The city, as an urban environment, functions as an exterior space, thus working in a system created in conjunction with interior spaces and thresholds. It is in the city's half-deserted streets and isolated inhabitants that we see the exterior urban environment's effect on society. Not only does the city work with interior and liminal spaces, but it also works as a direct opposition to any appearance of nature or landscape that Eliot utilizes. Eliot sets the city up as a hollow and fabricated environment that is devoid of natural and life-giving elements. The negative meaning that is attached to Eliot's city makes the opposing positive meaning that Eliot attaches to natural settings even more powerful.

The reader realizes the full alienating effect of the city on its inhabitants because Eliot makes sure to describe nature as full of regenerative potential, something never mentioned in reference to the urban environment. Though all landscapes work as a foil to the city, even within the category of landscape, certain oppositions exist. Human landscapes are places where humans can feel at home; the natural elements described in these landscapes are nurturing and beneficial to humans. But the reader may soon forget that not all natural environments are domestic, and thus miss part of Eliot's poetic message. To underscore this point Eliot describes inhuman landscapes like barren desert scenes, the vast cosmos or a cruel, destructive sea.

Finally, Eliot utilizes the tension between foreign and domestic space to point out the effect familiarity has on someone while he or she inhabits a space. If all spaces were familiar, there would be no chance of experiencing a different environment or surrounding. And the effect of a surrounding on a person is something Eliot seems to be fascinated with. Eliot uses these foils, these oppositions within his depiction of space, as tools to fully express his vision of the world. While one type of space may construct the foreground of the poem's setting, another may act as the background, allowing the reader to fully witness the 'bigger picture' Eliot is trying to create.

Thus, in my research and study of space and geographic locations in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, I found that while different aspects of space and geography can work both together and in opposition to each other, they also work as a cohesive system in Eliot's body of work. Space and geography become the way in which Eliot can fully portray his poetic vision; they become the backdrop and the setting to the message that Eliot is trying to convey to his readers. In short,



space in Eliot's poetry allows the reader a construct and a point of access with which to receive Eliot's poetic message.

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